

BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Brace Riley Ashford, ed. *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*. B & H. Publishing Group, 2011. Pp. 352. \$25.99.

The stated goal of this book, *Theology and Practice of Mission*, is “to provide a biblio-theological framework for understanding the church’s mission to the nations” (p. 1). In order to accomplish the goal, twenty-some contributors have teamed up to write on the subject of missions. These authors include several professors and pastors, but the majority of the essays are written by international church planters. We are assured by the editor that all the contributors share the conviction that “our mission must be driven by Christian Scriptures and sound theology, and that theology disconnected from mission is not Christian theology at all” (p. 4). No doubt, this means, for each, that mission disconnected from theology is not Christian mission at all. The essays, grouped in four main sections--God’s Mission; The Church’s Mission; The Church’s Mission to the Nations; Concluding Challenges--bear this out.

Editor Ashford and company are commended for their efforts to ground the church’s mission, uncompromisingly and unashamedly, in theology. So on the cover of the book Christopher Wright writes: “It is enormously encouraging to read a book on mission that consistently puts God and God’s mission first, that applies the grand biblical framework of creation, fall, redemption and new creation thoroughly and repeatedly across almost every issue it addresses, and which tackles some very controversial areas with grace, wisdom, and biblical thoroughness.” And just inside the cover Charles Lawless praises *Mission* for its first building “a strong theological foundation,” and then offering “practical application for taking the gospel to the world.” Indeed, we would join commending the book, with some reservation, as edifying and missions-motivating reading.

Keith Whitfield’s essay, “The Triune God: the God of Mission,” speaks to my heart of the central goal of the mission of the church, to glorify God, and of the fact that, though “missions includes our efforts to plan and go...it does not primarily depend on our activity and initiation. Missions is from our point of view the privileged participation in God’s mission to make himself known” (p. 22). In this same chapter Whitfield, as do some dozen other essayists, quotes from John Piper’s *Let the Nations be Glad*, “God is ultimate, not man.” To this reviewer, it doesn’t matter if a whole bookful of

authors were told to read the same thing in preparation for their writing, if only the bookful says just that: "God is ultimate, not man."

Alan and Katherine Carter's "The Gospel and Lifestyle" is a reminder, though a bit too mendicant-ish for me, to be good stewards of the time, talents, and resources God has given. The authors exhort us to "flee the temptation to bury such wealth (of the gospel, MD) under the rubble of a safe, comfortable, and unexamined lifestyle." They remind us, appropriately, that "our Lord summons us to diligently invest this gospel treasure in the lives of the lost, from our neighborhood to the ends of the earth" (p. 143).

A refreshing, down-to-earth critique of "quick" and "superficial" evangelism, is M. David Sills' "Mission and Discipleship." He bemoans the fact that "little by little, well-intentioned but overwhelmed missionaries have reduced the task of missions to proclaiming the gospel message to everyone who has never heard it" without ever truly discipling those who have heard. He writes: "Jesus did not commission us to go and get decisions from all men, and he certainly did not command us to preach the gospel and leave before they understood and truly received it" (pp. 186,187).

There are several essays that might well be required reading for missions courses in seminary. These endeavor, concretely, to bring the theology of the "story" of the gospel (creation, fall, redemption, restoration) to this world's heathen. There is a piece on "Mission to Muslims," another entitled "Mission to Hindus," and another "Mission to Buddhists." How to bring the "story" to animists and postmoderns is the subject of two other essays. Fitting, as well, might have been a few more essays of the same ilk, like: "Mission to Cultured Despisers," "Mission to Scientists-so-Called," "Mission to Warmed-over Christians," "Mission to Liberals," "Mission to Legalists."

What does not fit in this whole book is the "story theology" that is supposed to be the "strong theological foundation" of both the content and method of missions. The story theology turns out to be what Christopher J.H. Wright calls the Bible's "grand narrative" (see footnote on p. 222, and other references to Wright throughout the book), and which others call the "meta-narrative." The story theology of the authors of the book is the theology of Wright's protégés. Over and over, *ad nauseum* I almost say, the writers underscore and repeat, in application to their particular missions topic, the story of God's creation, man's fall, and the gospel of our redemption and restoration (the final consummation of our redemption and the renewal of all things). This would not be so bad (of course not!—it would be just redundant and simplistic) if "story" theology, and the application of this truth to missions were not, it seems to me, set over and against doctrinal (creedal!) theology. George Robinson, for example, in his essay "The Gospel and Evangelism," laments that, though "God chose to bring his gospel to the world in the form of an

unfolding story,” yet we have “reduced it into an outline of propositional statements.” Aside from bringing not one example of missionaries and churches “reducing” its mission to an outline of propositional statements, Robinson quotes with approval Rick Richardson who writes in his book, *Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey*, that the lost will be reached “not first through logic and proposition and dogma (but) through the renewal of the Story” (p. 77). This overemphasis of “story,” admittedly to combat some straw man preaching what might be the doctrine of the Bible but missing the history of the Bible, is nevertheless alarming. It smacks of “No Creed but Christ,” applied to missions: “No missions, but story.” In essence it is faddish—a “reimagining” of evangelism and missions which seeks to substitute something “other” than the whole counsel of God under the naive assumption that the gospel in “story form” alone effectively communicates God’s truth to heathen folk of all cultures (cf. Curry’s comments on p.222). What is needed in our day for missions, in addition to compassion for the lost and an understanding of just what form of corrupt religion they have substituted for the truth of God, is strong doctrinal and expository preaching, grounded in the story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration, centered on Christ, aiming for the glory of God, trusting in the means God gives, and not attempting to imagine (or “reimagine”) that fallen unbelievers are more open to story than they are to Trinity. Sinners need the story. They also need the “rest” of the story. Preach it preacher. Promote it Church. The dogma is the drama. The drama is for dogma. All Scripture, and all missions that sees fruit in true discipleship, is profitable for it.

Mitchell Dick

Michael F. Bird. *Jesus is the Christ: The Messianic Testimony of the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012. Pp. xi + 207. \$18.00.

Since the period of the old quest for the historical Jesus in the nineteenth century, biblical studies of the canonical Gospels have often focused upon the question of the so-called “messianic consciousness” of Jesus. Focus upon this question arose from the presumption among biblical critics that the canonical Gospels represent the evangelists’ superimposition upon the historical figure of Jesus the claim that he was the fulfillment of Old Testament teaching regarding a future Messiah who would redeem Israel and re-establish the Davidic kingdom. Within the framework of the assumptions of biblical criticism, much of the Gospels’ testimony to the messiahship of Jesus was the creation of the authors or arose out of the consciousness of the early church. In the critical study of

the New Testament Gospels, the figure of the historical Jesus (*Sitz im Leben Jesu*) was displaced by the figure of the church's Christ (*Sitz im Leben ecclesiae*). Form and redaction criticism largely expunged from the portrait of the historical Jesus the teaching that he was the long-awaited Messiah of Jewish expectation.

Michael F. Bird's book, *Jesus is the Christ*, is a sequel to an earlier work, *Are You the One Who is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009). In this work, Bird augments his argument, contrary to the tendency of modern biblical scholarship, that Jesus "did in fact claim to be the anointed deliverer referred to in Israel's sacred traditions and hoped for in diverse ways among some Second Temple Jewish groups" (vii). Whereas Bird focused in his earlier book upon the claims of Jesus "in his Jewish context," in this book he focuses upon the "function of Jesus' messiahship in the narrative and theological horizons of the evangelists" (vii). If the former book asked about Jesus' own consciousness of his calling as the Messiah of Israel, this volume aims to ascertain whether the claim that Jesus is the Messiah is an integral and irrepressible feature of the testimony to his person and work in the New Testament Gospels.

In the introduction to his study, Bird identifies its specific focus. In the history of the church, no Christological belief has enjoyed more consent than that Jesus is the Christ. Even a perfunctory reading of the canonical Gospels confirms that each of the evangelists, though in their own peculiar way, presents a portrait of Jesus that is pervasively shaped by the conviction of his messianic identity and mission. However, despite this pervasive witness to Jesus's messianic identity, the history of critical biblical studies from the nineteenth century until the present day has continued to offer a variety of interpretations of the New Testament that ascribe the claim that Jesus is the Christ to the "innovative" and later witness of the Gospel writers. In this trajectory of biblical scholarship, Jesus did not claim to be the Christ but only a prophet of the coming kingdom of God. However, after Jesus' crucifixion and death, the gospel writers identified him as the Messiah of Israel and thus made a kind of "ad hoc addition to the tradition ... in order to indicate that Jesus is a person of some importance in the divine plan" (3). Against these efforts to view the testimony of the gospel writers as an innovation, Bird argues that the messianic theme pervades the New Testament as a whole and the Gospels in particular. As he puts it, "it is the contention of this study that it is the messianic theme that is paramount. It is the testimony to Jesus as the Messiah that binds together the theological, literary, rhetorical, and social functions of the four canonical Gospels" (31).

After setting forth the contours of his study, Bird advances his claim in four chapters, each of which treats one of the canonical Gospels. In the first of these chapters, the Gospel of Mark is outlined

in terms of its treatment of “the crucified Messiah.” According to Bird, Mark’s relatively brief treatment of Jesus’ life, which leads quickly to his crucifixion and death, provides an apology for the messianic identity of Jesus that especially emphasizes the place of the cross in his mission. Chapter 2 treats the Gospel of Matthew, which accents the Davidic or royal features of Jesus’s messianic identity. For Matthew, Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel’s history, the Son of David who comes to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament Scriptures. Chapter 3 addresses the two-part work of the evangelist Luke, who emphasizes especially the prophetic role of Jesus as the Messiah, and the way in which the church, comprised of Jews and Gentiles, is the continuation of Israel’s story in the gathering of all the nations to Christ. In Chapter 4, Bird argues that the Gospel of John presents Jesus as the “elusive Messiah,” the one whom the Father sends into the world to fulfill through his “signs” the promises of the Old Testament Scriptures. More than the other evangelists, John offers a profound disclosure of the uniqueness of Jesus’s messianic identity: he is also the “one and only Son” who comes from the Father, and whose glory is exhibited especially in his mission to lay down his life for his own. While Bird acknowledges the uniqueness of the Gospel of John’s testimony to Jesus’s messianic identity, he resists the temptation to view John’s portrait of Jesus as a more “hellenized” than Jewish figure. Like all the evangelists, John emphasizes how the cross and resurrection belong to the heart of Jesus’s messianic identity.

In the concluding chapter of his study, Bird reviews the claims of the various chapters of the book, and then identifies some of its broader implications for Christian theology in general. Among these implications, he identifies the following: 1) Jesus’s messianic identity shows that the “church will always be umbilically linked to Israel” (144); 2) the Christological controversies of the early church in the second through the fourth centuries focused “mainly on ontological and metaphysical questions raised by the intellectual currents of the day,” sometimes at the risk of losing the historical identity of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel (145); and 3) the messianic identity of Jesus sets certain clear “boundaries” for any formulation of the doctrine of Christ. While Bird affirms the doctrine of Christ’s person that was formulated in the conciliar decisions of the early church, he emphasizes the importance of retaining the strong link between Christ’s person and work and his messianic identity as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Furthermore, the integral role of Christ’s death and resurrection in the fulfillment of his messianic mission as prophet, priest, and king, militates against any “Gnostic” reduction of Jesus’ identity to that of a purveyor of esoteric mysteries or ideas. The historical Jesus was not merely a prophet in the line of the prophets of Israel. He was the one and only Son, whom the Father sent into the world to reveal his redemptive purposes, to

offer himself as the Lamb of God upon the cross, and to usher in the kingdom of God.

While traditional, orthodox readers of the New Testament Gospels might find Bird's study and conclusions rather predictable, it is evident that Bird is writing for a different audience. He aims to persuade, to offer an apology for a reading of the New Testament Gospels that shows that the messianic identity and mission of Jesus originate in his own person and work, as this is richly communicated by the four-fold testimony of the New Testament Gospels. When read with this aim in mind, Bird's study is a provocative, necessary reminder of what too much contemporary biblical scholarship has attempted to deny.

Cornelis P. Venema

John Bolt, James D. Bratt, and Paul J. Visser, eds. *The J. H. Bavinck Reader*. Translated by James A. De Jong. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013. Pp. 429. \$38.00.

Take up and read...Bavinck! If you have a heart for God, for the gospel, and for the mission of the Church to and in this world, take up and read...Bavinck! Such is the call of those who are acquainted with the thought and work of the lesser known nephew of the Herman Bavinck of systematic theology fame. Hear what they say of this certain nephew Johan Herman Bavinck (1895-1964), touting him as a true spiritual father and brother of the many sons and siblings still seeking the lost and planting the flag of the Church of Christ in all the world in these latter days. Harken to Richard Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary), who, commenting on Bavinck's contributions to missiology and the theology of culture, says that they are "a well-kept secret in the English speaking world," and are nothing less than "wonderful." Note well the words of Jan Jongeneel (Utrecht University), who, heralding the wisdom and relevancy of Bavinck for our day writes: "Bavinck combines a strong biblical orientation with a deep understanding of the human soul. His reflections on God's revelation to the human community, religious consciousness, and Eastern mysticism can help us to do Christian mission properly in today's context." Lend an ear to Bavinck scholar Paul Visser, whose doctoral thesis (2003) on the life and thought of Bavinck shows Bavinck's own great heart for the gospel and for the world, and who contends that he is "the premier twentieth century missiologist in the Dutch neo-calvinist tradition."

With the newly published *J.H. Bavinck Reader* you may take up and read Bavinck for yourself, and, it is hoped, become a doer, and not only a hearer of the mission work and word of Bavinck. In fact, you might have read at least some of Bavinck before this. I

remember reading his *Introduction to the Science of Missions* way back in seminary. But the *Bavinck Reader* makes more of Bavinck's work known. *The Bavinck Reader* is an endeavor, more particularly, and according to the editors' preface, to "make some of the Dutch missiologist's seminal works in revelation and religion, religious consciousness, and the engagement of the Christian gospel with other religious traditions, available in convenient form for an English audience."

There are four main parts of this *Reader*. The first is an introduction to "the life and thought of Bavinck." Paul Visser writes this. Though in the mind of this reviewer this introduction is a bit lengthy (over ninety pages) for what is supposed to be, after all, a *Bavinck Reader*, and not a Bavinck biography or analysis, it serves the helpful purpose of acquainting the reader with Bavinck's life, work, and unique contribution to the theology and practice of missions. The introduction covers seven main heads, ranging from an account of Bavinck's early years, to the content and context of his thought, a presentation of Bavinck's work on "religious consciousness" from a biblical perspective, to his missiological approach and method.

The next main sections of the *Bavinck Reader* present Bavinck himself through some of his essays, lectures, and major works. The editors have compiled these under various headings. These are: "God's Revelation to the Nations" (Part I); "Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith" (Part II); and "Christ and Asian Mysticism" (Part III). The headings are appropriate and helpful encapsulations of the subjects Bavinck addressed. The writings and speeches themselves are heavily foot noted. A good deal of the "editor's notes" I find cumbersome and rabbit-holish—leading one down and into a veritable warren of obscure aside-scholarship trails.

But the writings themselves are gems—both uncut, original-thought gems, and also more polished Reformed theological gems. Their value is their unique and multi-faceted approach to what Visser calls "the theme governing the whole of Bavinck's missionary theology," namely, "the question of the relationship between religious experience and God's revelation in Christ" (p.42). We let Bavinck himself pose the question this way: The question has always interested us whether a definite connection exists between a vague, general religious consciousness that pervades human thought and inquiry like a kind of aura on the one hand and the Christian faith that has played such an enormous role in the history of our part of the world on the other. How should we regard these two major forces: religious consciousness and the Christian faith? Are they partners, related in their deepest essence and flowing into and out of one another? Or, are they actually grim antagonists that cannot tolerate one another? That question has definitely acquired new relevance in the contemporary context. (p. 145)

It was in pondering this question of the relationship of general religious consciousness and the revelation of the Christian faith that Bavinck, in his zealous and tireless quest to bring the gospel to the nations, discovered, he thought, five points of contact or “magnetic points,” each corresponding to a “primal human question” that all religious folk ask, and which “irresistibly compel human religious thought.” Visser summarizes these magnetic points as 1. *A sense of belonging to the whole; an awareness of cosmic relationship*; 2. *A sense of transcendent norms*; 3. *A sense of existence being governed by a providential or destining power*; 4. *A recognition of the need for redemption*; 5. *A sense of relatedness to a Superior or Supreme Power* (pp.57, 58).

These “points,” these “elements of truth” in all religions, are known by all men via the general revelation of God. This is the clear teaching, according to Bavinck, of Romans 1. This general revelation, or natural light, leads to the creation of religions and cultures in which people live. Just how these religious and cultural glimmerings of light shine among the various people groups of the world must be known in order to understand where other people are at, and just how we as Christians can provide a worldview that “just as completely encompasses all of life and thought as theirs does.” So Bavinck contends: “Mission is much more than simply bringing a few souls into contact with the gospel. It is both an enormous, inner struggle against an entire worldview and an attempt to give birth to a view of all things based on a new set of principles” (p. 362).

Thus, the *Reader* shows that Bavinck sought to take into account the effect of general revelation upon the nations. Bavinck would, on the one hand, value this general revelation so much that, because of this general revelation, “other religions contain elements that, after conversion to the gospel, can lead to a deeper encounter with the biblical message” (p. 62). On the other hand, despite the similarities and points of contact, for Bavinck the difference between the Christian faith and general religious consciousness was great. The two, religious consciousness and Christian faith, may “live in one house,” but “are...dogged enemies” (p.62). Only in the revelation of Christ in the Word and preaching of the gospel can one know the realities of God, sin, man, and deliverance (p.408). There is “a deep chasm” between the Christian faith and all other religions. So, Bavinck would warn: “If we do not wish to mislead others and ourselves, we need to reckon more deeply and seriously with this essential difference” (p. 399). So, Bavinck would teach the need, not only for a missionary understanding and empathy among the heathen, but also for a vigorous “missionary elenctics,” namely, “the discipline that directly confronts non-Christian religions in order to convince non-Christians of sin and to move them to repentance and conversion” (as defined by Visser, p. 83).

In reading J.H. Bavinck through this *Reader* we can only conclude with his editors that Bavinck's work continues to be a sure guide and a constructive way forward in the Church's navigation between "the treacherous shoals that are bounded on one side by an absolutism that is isolated from the concrete religious experience of people and on the other by relativistic religious pluralism" (editors' preface, p. xi).

So, reader, take up the *Reader* and read! Hear from one of Christ's men who would be all things to all men to win them for Christ. Hear, go, and do likewise.

Mitchell Dick

Henry Cloud and John Townsend. *Boundaries: When to say yes and How to say no to take control of your life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992. Pp. 314. \$14.99.

A friend suggested I read this book. We were having a prolonged discussion about sustaining a healthy and happy ministry. A big part of sustaining a healthy ministry is preventing ministerial burnout. During the conversation I quoted one influential pastor who said that "maturity in ministry is the ability to say no to something without explanation." I long for this kind of maturity. In light of this longing my friend suggested I read *Boundaries*.

Boundaries is a book, as the subtitle suggest, about how to take control over your life, knowing what is your responsibility and what is not, and therefore knowing when to say "yes" and when to say "no." As the first Chapter illustrates, a life without boundaries is a miserable life. It is one in which you are often controlled by other people, manipulated and forced to do things that are not your responsibility. You often feel trapped, emotionally conflicted, and stretched beyond your limits; out of control.

Having good boundaries is all about Biblical stewardship of ourselves and our responsibilities (73, 107-109, 281, 291). "Boundaries define us. They define *what is me* and *what is not me* ... where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership." As the writers further explains:

Knowing what I own and take responsibility for gives me freedom. If I know where my yard begins and ends, I am free to do with it what I like. Taking responsibility for my life opens up many different options. However, if I do not "own" my life, my choices and options become very limited (31).

This book is, therefore, an introduction to boundaries issues which when properly understood will help us to take better control of

our lives. As a general overview of boundaries the focus falls on three areas: *What are Boundaries?* (Part 1 – Chapters 1-6); *Boundary Conflicts*, dealing in each chapter with the type of boundary conflicts we experience with family, friends, spouses, children, work, self and God (Part 2 – Chapters 7-13); and, the final section helps us in *Developing Healthy Boundaries* (Part 3 – Chapter 14-16).

I highly recommend this book for everyone, but especially for pastors and elders. Not only will they benefit personally as they reflect upon their own boundary issues, but they will gain a lot of wisdom to minister more wisely to others who struggle. Although we might not agree with the use of some of the Scripture passages and Biblical support offered, the wisdom and insight offered in this book far outweighs its shortcomings!

Jacques Roets

Brannon Ellis, *Calvin, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Aseity of the Son* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Pp. viii + 250 pp. \$135.00 (cloth).

The growing body of literature on trinitarian theology often bypasses the period of Reformed orthodoxy. Calvin is a partial exception to this rule. However, contemporary authors frequently isolate him from his historical context within the developing Reformed tradition. Brannon Ellis treats Calvin's contribution to the doctrine of self-existence of the Son as it relates both to Reformed orthodoxy and to contemporary theology. He corrects many misappropriations of Calvin on this important theme. The question that he treats is how the divine attribute of aseity, or self-existence, relates to the doctrine of eternal generation, in which the Father begets the Son from all eternity. This is an issue that many continue to raise and which has caused great confusion and controversy in recent decades. This book is complex and requires some level of expertise to follow adequately, but it is a superb study that this reviewer cannot praise highly enough, both for its historical clarity and for its contributions to contemporary theology.

Ellis regards Calvin as neither undermining nor merely assenting to classical Trinitarian language, but developing it in a more consistent manner (7). He proposes two aims for his book: "My historical aim is to explain the autothean controversies' basic significance for the classical trinitarian tradition and its heirs. . . . My theological aim is not to denounce or undermine classical trinitarianism, but to summon the heirs of this tradition – from within it – to consistency at this particularly significant pivot of thought and speech about the Triune God" (10-11).

While much of the language of historic Trinitarian theology appears complex and at times speculative, the matter of ultimate

importance is whether it agrees with the Word of God. Both Ellis and Calvin share this concern. In light of the importance of the question of the aseity of the Son to trinitarian theology, this review will sketch the arguments of each chapter of this work, including critical interaction where needed.

Chapter one examines Calvin's teaching on the aseity of the Son. He believed that the Father eternally communicated personal subsistence to the Son but that he did not communicate the divine essence to him. He taught that terms such as eternal generation applied to personal subsistence only, or to the relationship of the persons to each other, but not to the Godhead. Orthodox trinitarians opposed Calvin's teaching. They were willing to accept the aseity of the Son in a certain sense: "An adjectival attribution of aseity to the Son was acceptable, because he eternally *is* the Son who is essentially self-existent. But as an adverbial attribution—that he is self-existent God—was unintelligible, because he eternally possesses the self-existent divine essence by generation from the Father" (34). It is important to recognize that communication of the divine essence does not mean that the Father was the origin of the Son's divinity. Most classical trinitarians rejected the idea of origin with regard to the divine nature. This reviewer has found in his own research that most Reformed orthodox authors believed that the Father eternally communicated both deity and personal subsistence to the Son on the grounds that deity and personal subsistence cannot be abstracted from one another. The idea was that the Son must possess all divine attributes, including self-existence, but that the person who is eternally begotten is a divine person. The Son has both personal subsistence and self-existence in perfect equality with the Father by eternal generation. This alternative view will be important in the discussion below.

Chapter two traces the theological context of Calvin's views on the aseity of the Son. Ellis's primary contention is that his teaching in this area developed positively upon orthodox trinitarian theology rather than merely responding to "antitrinitarian heterodoxy" (38). Pierre Caroli objected to Calvin's teaching on the grounds that his views bordered on both Arianism and Sabellianism (42-43). Arians denied that Christ was God equal with the Father. Caroli believed that the only way for the Son to be fully divine was through possessing the same essence as the Father through eternal generation. Sabellianism taught that God was one person who manifested himself in three different ways. Caroli leveled this seemingly contradictory accusation simultaneously to that of Arianism because he believed that removing communication of essence from eternal generation resulted in denying the personal distinction between the Father and the Son. Calvin responded that it is equally inappropriate to deny that the Son is from the Father in

relation to his personal subsistence as it is “to say that he is from the Father with respect to his essence” (46-47).

Ellis then turns to Calvin’s controversies with antitrinitarians such as Valentine Gentile. The fact that Calvin’s opponents criticized him of treating the divine essence as a quaternity that stood apart from the three persons (53) illustrates the difficulty that both orthodox and heterodox writers had with understanding his position. The question of quaternity was prominent in the Middle Ages. It entailed the idea that the divine essence was a fourth thing in the Trinity that the three persons shared among themselves rather than making the divine nature inherent to the divine persons. Both sets of opponents believed that Calvin abstracted the divine essence from the personal subsistences in the Godhead. The chapter concludes by arguing that Calvin’s modification to the idea of the aseity of the Son was his attempt to harmonize classical trinitarian language and distinctions.

Chapter three examines historically the theological functions of the doctrine of eternal generation. Ellis helpfully reduces these functions to five categories: eternal generation secures personal distinction in the Godhead (70-78), taxis or order among the persons (78-83), consubstantiality (83-96), equality (96-97), and perichoresis or mutual indwelling (97-98). This is the clearest summary of the historical function of eternal generation that this reviewer has read. Ellis then argues that using eternal generation to undergird consubstantiality and equality “oversteps the boundaries of ‘irreducible threeness’ to which it belongs” (99). His contention is that eternal generation defines the distinction and interrelationship between the divine persons rather than their common divine essence. He adds that communication of essence inappropriately attempts to explain “the ineffable manner of divine generation.”

This reviewer tentatively raises two objections against these arguments in favor of the majority Reformed orthodox view. First, Ellis’s assertions unintentionally abstract divine personality from divine essence. The persons in question are divine persons, not personal abstractions within the divine essence. While this goes beyond the scope of this review, the New Testament consistently treats the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as divine persons, and it depicts the one true God as three persons. The divine nature is not something that the persons have, but it is what they are. If personal subsistence comes from the Father, then Godhead must come with it, yet in a way that neither implies inequality nor subordination. When the Father begets the Son through eternal generation, he begets a divine person rather than a personal quality of the generic divine nature. This was why Calvin’s opponents accused him of teaching a quaternity in the Godhead. Second, it is inaccurate to say that communication of essence contradicts the orthodox view that the manner of eternal generation is “ineffable.” Eternally

communicating the divine essence from Father to Son without diminishing the self-existence of the Son is definable, but it is still ineffable. Calvin's view still provides an "explanation" of the nature of eternal generation, albeit an eternal one. This question is ultimately incomprehensible, but to some extent it seems to be unavoidable.

Chapter four outlines the terms of the autothean debate and later post-Reformation approaches to this question (103). Ellis treats "five Trinitarian approaches" to the Son's aseity (109). He introduces this section with the Catholic apologist Robert Bellarmine's defense of Calvin's orthodoxy as trinitarian (109-112). The five approaches include the Remonstrants, Roell, the Roman Catholics and Lutherans, "the Reformed mainstream," and "the Reformed minority report." This chapter and the next two examine each of these views (112).

Chapter five introduces Bellarmine's rebuttal of Calvin's position on the aseity of the Son (139-145), even though he believed that Calvin stood within orthodoxy. He next treats the Lutheran rejection of Calvin's teaching (146-151). Ellis observes that some Lutheran theologians accused Calvin of Judaizing because he bypassed the Trinity in classic trinitarian passages in his commentaries and because he rarely found Christ in the Old Testament (148). In terms of Reformed authors, Ellis examines the writings of Girolamo Zanchi, Gisbertus Voetius, and Bernardinus de Moor (153). These men defended Calvin's view regarding the Son's aseity, but they modified it as well. They contended that the Son possessed self-existence as a divine attribute but that he possessed this attribute through eternal communication from the Father. This did not mean that the Father was the origin of the Son's deity but that the Son is eternally divine through communication of the divine attributes from the Father. He concludes, "The most important thing to garner about the character of the mainstream Reformed advocacy of Calvin's language is that the Son is autotheos or self-existent God understood quite strictly in terms of *external essential independence*" (159).

In order to represent the Reformed minority who followed Calvin (chapter six), Ellis selected Lucas Trelcatius, Bartholomaeus Keckermann, and Johannes Maccovius (174). Ellis contends that essential communication from the Father to the Son is not necessary to affirm eternal generation (176). Keckermann questioned whether we should speak of essential communication at all (184). He believed that the idea of essential communication was improper but not unorthodox. He concluded that debates over communication of essence were more semantic than substantive (187). Maccovius criticized the Arminians as having Socinian tendencies by making a distinction in the deity of the Father and the Son (191). His point was that any essential difference between the Father and the Son amounted to difference in nature. He argued that claiming that the Son is God self-existently did not deny "his divine filiation" (192).

Herman Alexander Roell provoked an increased bias against Calvin's minority view (196). The reason was that, while he affirmed that God was one in essence and three in persons, he denied the eternal order of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Godhead. As a result, Ellis concludes, "Before it had a chance to take root and to flower, the environment within which this Reformed minority approach was to grow up had become inhospitable." Until Roell, Reformed writers were less suspicious of the minority position, though they continued to defend Calvin's orthodoxy. This highlights the fact that the differences between these views are minor.

The last chapter (seven) includes Ellis's constructive theological conclusions. He argues that aseity is a positive rather than a privative concept (199). Saying that God is self-existent is more than simply saying that he is uncaused (201). This means that aseity does not allow for possessing deity by communication. This reviewer has argued above why this is not necessarily the case. Ellis argues that communication of the divine attributes among the persons is not necessary to affirm eternal generation. He argues this point well, even though this reviewer leans in favor of the Reformed majority viewpoint. Ellis adds that the Son is the true God "without reserve" in the distinct mode of his subsistence (205). While this statement is true, communication of essence does not imply any "reserve" in regard to the Son's full deity. This would be true only if the Father was the origin or source of the Son's deity. Pages 222-226 treat the often neglected subject of the Trinity in relation to the covenant of redemption. This section is worth consulting for theological reflection. Ellis concludes that Calvin's teaching on the aseity of the Son and eternal generation potentially resolves tensions within orthodox trinitarianism by picking and choosing elements within that tradition (226). Whether or not this is true, his study reminds readers that while there are clearly defined lines between orthodox trinitarianism and heresy, we must hold to some of our conclusions regarding the nature of eternal generation humbly and tentatively.

This brilliant book is complex and requires undistracted concentration to read profitably. However, it clarifies a complex historical debate about eternal generation that continues to have practical implications in the church. Some at the present day have been accused of rejecting eternal generation when they have adopted Calvin's position. Others claim to teach Calvin's view but go beyond Calvin by rejecting historic Christian creeds. Ellis wonderfully helps readers discern what lies in the realm of orthodoxy. All readers should walk away from this book concluding that we have known the edges of God's ways and we have gained a glimpse of his back parts only.

Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. 592. \$19.95. *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion*. New York: Knopf, 2013. Pp. 656. \$35.00.

The U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) is the most significant event in American history. One cannot hope to understand America's founding, in which the Founders avoided dealing decisively with slavery so that a Union of the States might occur, or what happened thereafter (up to this day), without addressing the Civil War. The War started more than a century and a half ago and its most important battle occurred on July 1-3, 1863, 150 years ago this summer, the Battle of Gettysburg. Allen C. Guelzo, prize-winning Lincoln scholar, has written two first rate histories, one on the entire War and Reconstruction, the other on the Battle of Gettysburg. He is the Henry R. Luce Professor of the Civil War Era at Gettysburg College. There he also directs the center of the Civil War era studies program. Professor Guelzo was born in Yakima, Japan. As a Reformed Christian, he is conversant with matters theological and that shows itself at points to the careful reader. For someone who wishes to understand American history, socially, politically, intellectually, militarily, and otherwise, these two books serve as an excellent guide.

The literature on the Civil War is vast, comprising more than 60,000 volumes. One might ask why these new volumes are needed. There is so much specialized work on the War that a volume like *Fateful Lightning* is most useful to help the non-specialist to get a good grasp on the events leading up to the War (Guelzo begins with the founding), the War itself (including an adroit treatment of the military history), and its aftermath, making countless connections and seeking to furnish us with explanations of what it all means. I think that *Fateful Lightning* could become the new "go-to" one volume work on the War.

Guelzo recognizes the importance of, and has written separately about, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Lincoln's religious convictions, and so forth. All that previous work comes to fruitful service in the place that it moves Guelzo to give to the Second Inaugural Address in this work, an address without rival as a political speech, containing the most remarkable religious rhetoric and providential analysis of events ever uttered in a politician's speech. Lincoln said, and it's worth citing at length, just weeks before an assassin's bullet killed him, with respect to North and South (and anticipating their reunion): "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered

fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

Guelzo appreciates the profundity of Lincoln's analysis in the Second Inaugural Address. This factors into Guelzo's part in the long-standing debate among historians as to whether the War was avoidable or inevitable. Reformed Christians understand that God ordains all that comes to pass, so there are no accidents: all is part of God's providence. This does not mean, however, that from the perspective of "second causes" it is illegitimate to argue about the "avoidability" of something like the Civil War. Those who argue that it was avoidable, even in recent works, tend to point out missed opportunities for constructive dialog and that heated passions time and again gave way to sound reasoning. Guelzo, refreshingly, does not argue such, showing that logic and reasoning were in no short supply and the War was the consequence of such reasoning having come to an end, or of relentless logic having nowhere to go, finally, but to violent deeds.

Several reviewers of this book appreciatively note that Guelzo both dispatches the "Lost Cause" view of the War—particularly the contention that the War was not about slavery but simply Southern self-government—and a typical concomitant of that view: the South was uniformly superior to the North militarily. While Guelzo certainly recognizes the genius of Robert E. Lee, he also points out much Northern military ability. And Guelzo also does not see Reconstruction as simply a failed policy that embittered the South and resulted in huge backlash, like the Jim Crow laws. Guelzo, while addressing all these matters with an admirable moderation, recognizes the assets as well as the liabilities of Reconstruction, especially that it would have been highly unlikely to have passed the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution without Reconstruction.

And *Gettysburg* brings the whole war into focus, so it's good to have a more extended treatment of this in a separate volume by

Guelzo. Much ink has been spilled on this battle as well, but Guelzo does a masterful job of bringing things into sharp perspective here. Gettysburg was Lee's last major attempt to use the Army of Northern Virginia to "take the War to the Northerners." He figured that a decisive victory over George Meade's Army of the Potomac on Northern soil would likely cause Philadelphia and New York City to howl and demand that Lincoln sue for peace with the Confederacy. Lee may have been right, although it is arguable that the War was won by the North when it issued the Emancipation Proclamation, since it is unlikely that France or England would recognize the South after slavery was thrust to its center and the War was no longer chiefly about "preserving the Union." At any rate, Gettysburg was a decisive defeat for Lee, particularly occurring as it did with the defeat of Vicksburg by Grant at the same time. Guelzo beautifully chronicles all the complications leading up to and following the three days, as well as those decisive three days themselves, with prose approaching poetry on more than one occasion.

There are so many points in the Battle of Gettysburg, particularly on the first and second days, in which, had something here or there gone differently, the victory might have been the Confederates. There was much bravery and buffoonery on both sides. It is true that in so many battles before this, events often fell out in favor of Lee but in this decisive battle, at key points, whether in the failure of Lee's Army on the first day to take Little Round Top, on the one end of the Union Line, or Culp's Hill, on the other end of the line, events seemed to fall out in favor of Meade and his men. Guelzo, with particular deftness, shows how time and again, on the second day, various divisions of Longstreet's corps in the middle of the lines almost caused a Union collapse, particularly given the derring-do of New York General Dan Sickles. And then there is the storied charge of General Pickett on the third day, which was not as foolhardy as it is often portrayed, and its "Lost Cause" ethos is so well captured by William Faulkner, albeit in a bygone era: "For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet, it hasn't even begun yet, it not only hasn't begun yet but there is still time for it not to begin against that position and those circumstances..."

This reviewer has walked those fields at Gettysburg many times and there is a powerful sense that hangs about the whole battlefield that what happened there on those fateful days in a hot July not that long ago decided a nation's future: As President Lincoln said in

concluding the few remarks he made when dedicating the National Cemetery four months later at Gettysburg: “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” What happened there put an end to any imagined viability for the Confederate States of America and birthed a new nation that could no longer be conceived of as a collection of states. One might say that this battle, not the constitutional convention of 1789, truly brought the United States of America into being.

Alan D. Strange

Eugene P. Heideman. *The Practice of Piety: The Theology of the Midwestern Reformed Church in America, 1866-1966*. The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, gen. ed. Donald J. Bruggink. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Pp. xiv + 274. \$28.00.

Eugene Heideman’s *The Practice of Piety* is an extensive study of the theology and practice of the western wing of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). As an addition to The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, Heideman’s book fills a void in the literature and takes its place as an especially important source for an understanding of the history and theology of the RCA. In the only other comprehensive study of the history of Dutch Calvinism in North America, James Bratt focuses primarily upon the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and only secondarily upon the RCA. Based upon extensive research in the original Dutch and English sources, Heideman’s account of the history of the Midwestern branch of the RCA helps to redress an imbalance in the literature.

While Heideman presents a general outline of the history of the RCA, his particular focus, as the title and subtitle of his book intimates, is upon the theology and piety of the Midwestern side of the RCA. Students of the history of the RCA are well aware of the significant divergence between its eastern wing whose history in North America dates back to 1628, and its western wing whose history dates back to the 1840’s. Like its close sister denomination, the CRC, the history of the western portion of the RCA is intimately connected to the “Secession” (*Afscheiding*) from the national Reformed Church in the Netherlands in 1834 and thereafter. The membership of the RCA in the west was primarily drawn from Dutch immigrants who were influenced by the theology and piety of the secessionist tradition in the Netherlands. Though the two

denominations, the RCA and the CRC, have had a long and fractious relationship throughout their history, Heideman's book illustrates that they remained close cousins, whatever their family differences.

Heideman divides his study into seven chapters. The first chapter begins with a broad overview of the history of the Midwestern Reformed Church in America and identifies a number of the principal leaders and publications that were especially influential throughout its history. The succeeding chapters then focus upon different aspects of the theology and piety of the RCA. Chapter 2, "The Practice of Piety: Worshiping God in a New Land," describes the theology and patterns of worship that characterized the churches of the RCA. These patterns included a special emphasis upon the preaching of the Word of God, the use of the Heidelberg Catechism, a strong Sabbath ethos, and a practice of family worship and devotions. Chapter 3, "The Practice of Piety: All Things Decently and in Order," provides a detailed account of the Midwestern RCA's adherence to the general provisions of the Church Order of Dort, with modifications that were introduced to accommodate the uniquely North America context of the church. In this chapter, Heideman offers a helpful treatment of the difficult relationship between the RCA and the CRC, as well as a series of church union efforts in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter 4, "Reformed Pietists: The Way of Salvation," describes the theological emphases of the pastors and theologians of the Midwestern RCA. In Heideman's assessment of these emphases, the Midwestern RCA exhibited the considerable influence of the pietist Reformed tradition in the Netherlands, particularly the experientialism of the "Nadere Reformatie" (nearer or second Reformation). Chapter 5, "The Practice of Piety: A Godly Community in a Christian Land," details the way the RCA's leaders addressed the broader engagement of the Christian community with its surrounding culture and society. Although the RCA shared with the CRC a desire to influence the culture and broader society, its stance was far less antithetical than that of the CRC, which always struggled with the problems attendant upon "Americanization" in the new world. In Chapter 6, "The Authority of the Bible in the Modern World," Heideman discusses the RCA's traditional adherence to a high doctrine of the Scripture's inspiration and authority in its confrontation with higher criticism and Protestant liberalism. The last chapter of the volume, "New Perspectives on the Old Faith," takes the reader to the present and offers a more direct assessment of the present state of the RCA and the challenges it faces.

Based upon a thorough investigation of the historical sources, Heideman's study presents a clear and striking profile of the RCA. On the one hand, the reader will be struck at the considerable overlap in piety and theology between the Midwestern RCA and the CRC. Since these two denominations have always had an uneasy relationship

from the time of the secession of elements of Classis Holland of the RCA in 1857 to form the CRC, this may surprise some readers. But it is not so surprising, when it is remembered that the Midwestern RCA is rooted in the same historical traditions as the CRC. On the other hand, the reader will also come away with a clear impression of the Midwestern RCA as a more “Americanized” denomination than the CRC in the period Heideman treats. While the piety and practice of the RCA in this period retained its Reformed accent, it was also shaped by a more broadly evangelical and American type of Protestantism, whether in its worship, piety, or theology. Heideman also argues cogently in his concluding chapter that the distinctiveness of the Midwestern wing of the RCA throughout the denomination’s history is no longer as important as it once was for an estimation of the RCA’s future. Perhaps it is putting it a little too strongly, but Heideman’s description of the present and future challenges facing the RCA suggests that the denomination’s identity today might best be described as that of a moderately evangelical and Reformed version of mainline Protestantism.

For those interested in the past and present state of the Midwestern RCA, Heideman’s book is undoubtedly the place to begin.

Cornelis P. Venema

James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. 570. \$60.00 (cloth).

James Moorhead, church historian at Princeton Theological Seminary, has written a history of the Seminary that is not merely an institutional reprise of its past but a work that illumines how the school was central to the church—not just the Presbyterian Church but the broader American church—and even to the national culture. He wrote this work for the two-hundredth anniversary of the seminary, which was founded in 1812. What had preceded the seminary is a tale in its own right and Moorhead recounts it as part of the lead-up to the founding of the Seminary. He takes the story of the Seminary to the present day. Moorhead writes well and offers many insights into the seminary’s fascinating and significant history; nevertheless, he fumbles at a few points, allowing his commitment to gender equality, for instance, to shape his reading of the history, as a result being less than fair with some of his subjects.

The story begins in colonial times, with the beginning of the Presbyterian Church in America. The first Presbytery was founded in 1706 and the first Synod a decade later (both in Philadelphia), with the Adopting Act of 1729 furnishing a doctrinal basis for the church in the Westminster Standards. The Great Awakening of the following decade and the permissibility of educating ministers in the “Log

College(s),” among other things, led to a split in the Presbyterian Church in 1741 between the supporters of the Awakening (styled “New Side”) and those who opposed it (called “Old Side”). This split lasted until 1758, at which point both sides composed their differences and reunited in a single body that further organized a General Assembly in 1789 as the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA).

The 1741 split had prompted the New Side men to press for the kind of training that the Log Colleges afforded to be made more widely accessible. This movement found its focus ultimately in a single institution that New Siders established in 1746: the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University). The first president of Princeton was the prominent New Side Presbyterian Jonathan Dickinson; the second was Aaron Burr, Sr. (son-in-law of Jonathan Edwards and father of the scoundrel); the third was Jonathan Edwards; the fourth, Samuel Davies; and the fifth was Samuel Finley. These all served in fairly rapid succession, prominent churchmen coming to head this newly-established, flourishing institution. The sixth president, John Witherspoon of Scotland, settled into a longer tenure, bringing with him commitments to Scottish Common Sense Realism and a vibrant Whig political philosophy that would be put into civil service.

Princeton had been founded, not solely but chiefly—as had Harvard (1636) and Yale (1701) earlier—to furnish the region and the newly-burgeoning nation with ministers of the gospel. Even though Witherspoon was a minister, as had been his predecessors, his political focus came to dominate the college, and by the turn of the nineteenth century Princeton was training more men in other professions, including public ones, than for the ministry. There were also concerns, that under Witherspoon’s successors, Princeton had become lax, both academically and morally. A growing consensus formed that a distinct institution was needed to train men for gospel ministry. While the Seminary shared some facilities and even faculty initially, Princeton Seminary was from the beginning, unlike the Divinity School at Harvard, for example, a separate institution from the College, with a distinct relationship to the General Assembly of the PCUSA.

The first Professor at the Seminary was Archibald Alexander, the second, Samuel Miller, and the third, Charles Hodge: these were all added in the first ten years of its life. Hodge would go on to serve for more than fifty-five years, training over 3000 men who served in the pastorate, professoriate, as missionaries, etc. The reason that Princeton Seminary would come to have the kind of impact that it did in the nineteenth-century is that the Presbyterian Church had influence out of proportion to its size on the nation as a whole—there was a disproportional number of political leaders who were Presbyterian—and Princeton, being the first seminary and associated

with the prominent college there, had the greatest influence in the Presbyterian Church.

Another split occurred in 1837. This time it was the Old School/New School split (the two were reunited in 1869), and Princeton, though not happy with the division, was Old School in its sentiment. Old School meant a fuller confessional subscription over against the New School that denied the penal, substitutionary atonement of Christ and the imputation of Adam's sin to his progeny and also imbibed a generally Arminian soteriology. Princeton remained Old School in its sentiments, one of the few holdouts, even after the turn of the twentieth century. The beginning of the end for Princeton orthodoxy was, arguably, in the administration of J. Ross Stevenson, who became president in 1914 and presided over the reorganization of Princeton.

Liberalism was bedeviling the church (addressed forcefully by Machen in his *Christianity and Liberalism* in 1923), and Princeton could not stay out of the fray. Stevenson, Charles Erdman, and others wanted Princeton to moderate her stance, while Warfield (who died in 1921) and Machen wanted Princeton to maintain her historic confessional positions. The Commission of 1925, appointed by Erdman when he moderated the PCUSA GA that year, reported in 1927, calling, among other things, for the reorganization of Princeton Seminary, a move that would lead to a moderate, and ultimately liberal, control of the Seminary.

In response, Machen and his allies formed Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929, with many of them ultimately withdrawing from the PCUSA to found the OPC in 1936. Moorhead portrays this as a contest between conservatives and ultra-conservatives, painting Machen in a combative, rather uncomplimentary light. Though previously Moorhead had attempted to show the first professors (Alexander, Miller, Hodge, etc.) in a generally positive light, he faults them according to a current political/cultural agenda, for being insufficiently sensitive to issues of race, gender, and the like. Whatever valid criticisms that could be brought in this respect should not obscure the signal contributions of Old Princeton to the broader church and the nation: a vigorous Calvinism that formed a needed counterpoint to Finney and others who promoted the "can-do" spirituality associated with American evangelical Arminianism that came to dominate the era of Jacksonian democracy.

Princeton's earlier years of staunch orthodoxy are something of an embarrassment to Moorhead (I don't mean to give the impression that he is unfair across the board to Old Princeton), and he is eager to tell the story of post-1930s Princeton, in which much of what Princeton had resisted for years came to dominate and Princeton became a champion of neo-orthodoxy (and worse) as it had been of orthodoxy. Particularly interesting in this regard is Moorhead's

treatment, or lack thereof, of the two-volume Princeton history of the 1990s by Covenant Seminary historian David Calhoun, published by Banner of Truth. It is the case that this is a history of Old Princeton and ends in 1929 with the re-organization of Princeton. While Calhoun's history may be deemed hagiographic by some, it is, on the whole, a fine work that merits the attention of anyone writing a current history of Princeton Seminary. Not only does Moorhead not interact with Calhoun's work (and Calhoun earned a Th.M. and a Ph.D. at Princeton) in any substantive way, he never cites his work, as if it doesn't exist. The only thing that he cites of Calhoun is an article that the latter wrote while at Princeton. Moorhead should not have utterly ignored Calhoun's book. If he thinks that Calhoun is wrong about Princeton's past, he should tell us so forthrightly.

These problems notwithstanding, this reviewer would recommend that any who are interested in American religion and culture, not simply Presbyterian history, should procure and read this new history of Princeton Seminary's two hundred years.

Alan D. Strange

Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. vii + 264. \$29.99 (cloth).

Students of seventeenth-century English theology must grapple with the reality and the charge of Socinianism upon English society. Even though Socinianism is best known for denying the Trinity, it became a seventeenth-century catch-word for any teaching that elevated reason over fundamental articles of the faith. This is the first major work treating English Socinianism in over fifty years. Mortimer's book stands out from its predecessors by showing the positive uses of Socinian theories on reason, natural law, and civil government in seventeenth-century England. This provides an intriguing contribution to the historical landscape of English theology.

Chapter one shows the rise and development of Socinianism. She argues that Socinianism represented a shift in the role of reason in establishing theological positions and a tendency to place Christian ethics above and even, at times, contrary to natural law. Chapter two expands this picture by demonstrating the different reactions of continental and English churches to Socinianism. Partly due to the fact that Arminius' successor at the University of Leiden, Conrad Vorstius, promoted Socinian ideas, the Dutch often lumped Socinianism and Arminianism together. However, early seventeenth-century England dissociated them more starkly. This was largely due to the Arminianizing tendencies of the English Church at the time.

Chapter three expands the English context by showing the circulation of Socinian ideas through informal studies at the Great Tew estate of Lord Falkland (known as the Great Tew Circle). This included well-known figures such as William Chillingworth and Edward Hyde, who later became the infamous Lord Clarendon. Chapter four illustrates the uses of Socinian rejections of self-defense to argue against resistance to monarchs, which Royalists made good use of during the English Civil War. Particularly interesting in this connection is Francis Cheynell's deep concern over Socinian political influences on English society (109-113, 126). Cheynell was a member of the Westminster Assembly whose writings on the Trinity have recently received increased attention. Mortimer highlights a hitherto neglected aspect of his thought.

Chapter five depicts the use of Socinian ideas on reason and natural law to defend episcopacy. Chapter six introduces attacks on the Trinity in England. This includes the oft neglected observation that Remonstrant theologians began to deny that the Trinity was an essential doctrine of the faith (152). This led to problems when the Cromwellian settlement tried to form a list of fundamental doctrines of the faith. Chapter seven treats views on toleration with special reference to John Owen (194-204). Chapter eight unfolds how Socinian views of nature and religion gained prominence in the 1650's. Most of this chapter addresses Owen's lengthy refutation of John Biddle and Hugo Grotius. The concluding chapter summarizes Socinian contributions to English theology in terms of the centrality of reason over against natural law and the importance of individual freedom (240).

Mortimer provides valuable historical insight into how Socinians altered Protestant defenses of the authority of Scripture. These alterations are more akin to modern post-Enlightenment apologetic views than to seventeenth-century Reformed assumptions. Faustus Socinus sought to prove the authority of Scripture through historical investigation in the way that one would approach any other historical source (18). This was a radical idea at the time, since it potentially mitigated the absolute authority of Scripture. The Great Tew Circle followed Grotius' appropriation of these arguments under the assumption that "faith was similar to other branches of human knowledge" (70). These people treated faith as assent to probable propositions based on probable arguments. Though Mortimer does not mention the fact, this approach stands in stark contrast to Owen's *Reason of Faith*, where he argued that faith cannot rest on probable arguments but only on divine testimony. To complicate matters, Socinians allowed for conflict—or at least non-correspondence—between the laws of nature and revealed religion (33). These features pose a greater threat to the historic Protestant view of the certainty of divine revelation than many post-Enlightenment Reformed thinkers have recognized. In this

connection, Mortimer notes that Socinian ideas “still appeal today” (240).

The author displays great mastery of Socinian-influenced sources. However, she demonstrates a weak grasp of Reformed theology. For instance, she claims that Chillingworth contradicted “the standard Protestant interpretation” of denying ourselves and following Christ by teaching “that Christ’s words must be understood as commands or laws which demanded strict obedience from his followers” (80). Mortimer appears to mistake Chillingworth’s understanding of “the standard Protestant interpretation” with the reality. Later she adds, “Chillingworth had begun to move away from Reformed Christianity, suggesting that Christ demanded from his followers a sincere attempt to live according to his laws” (89). However, the “standard Protestant interpretation” included strict obedience in following Christ. The difference between the Socinian and Protestant position was the ground on which obedience rested. Reformed theologians rooted obedience in union with Christ. Chillingworth’s Socinianized version of self-denial rooted obedience in moral fortitude and free will. Mortimer gives the impression that all Protestants were theological antinomians. Her later claim that both the Reformed and Arminians believed that “Christ was a redeemer rather than a teacher” (122) is somewhat astonishing. Both groups believed that Christ was a prophet as well as a priest and a king, even though they stressed his role as teacher differently than Socinians did. No historian can master all of the relevant sources, but this is a serious deficiency in Mortimer’s work. Rather than searching the primary sources of Reformed theology, she appears to accept Socinian caricatures of it at face value.

This volume is an important contribution to a small but growing body of material on seventeenth-century Trinitarian theology. Its primary value consists in unfolding the story of anti-Trinitarians in their English context.

Ryan M. McGraw

K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practices in Defense of our Faith*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013. Pp. 288. \$19.99.

Scott Oliphint, Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), has given us some excellent works in recent years. And this latest is no exception: in fact, *Covenantal Apologetics* stands as one of the best and clearest expositions of the apologetic tradition that surrounds and stems from Cornelius Van Til. One of Oliphint’s particular burdens in this work is the reform of apologetical nomenclature. He is no longer satisfied

with the rubric “presuppositional apologetics” as an apt name for what Van Til and others of us who labor in that tradition seek to do.

Oliphint finds “presuppositional apologetics” vague—practitioners as different as Francis Schaeffer, Gordon Clark, and E. J. Carnell all laid claim to “presuppositions” in their apologetical arguments (38-9)—and no longer possessing the meaning that it once did, in the post-Kuhnian world in which all post-moderns admit the existence of presuppositions and often reduce all differences to “mere perspectivalism.” Oliphint wants to avoid that confusion, so he opts for “covenantal apologetics,” recognizing that God, in condescending to man, entered into a covenant relation with him so that all men walk *coram Deo*, either as covenant keepers (only by His saving grace, after the Fall) or covenant breakers (insofar as they remain in Adam and in rebellion).

Having looked briefly at the mandate for the apologetic task and how our apologetics, properly, ought to be a covenantal apologetics, Oliphint sets forth ten tenets (that he originally explicates on pp. 48-54) to which he has reference throughout the remainder of the book. These tenets highlight that all of us, believer and unbeliever, are covenant creatures and live out our lives in the context of covenant, either the broken covenant of works that condemns us or the merciful covenant of grace that saves us. The ten tenets are as follows:

1) The faith that we are defending must begin with, and necessarily include, the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who, as God, condescends to create and to redeem.

2) God’s covenantal revelation is authoritative by virtue of what *is*, and any covenantal, Christian apologetic will necessarily stand on and utilize that authority in order to defend Christianity.

3) It is the truth of God’s revelation, together with the work of the Holy Spirit, that brings about a covenantal change from one who is in Adam to one who is in Christ.

4) Man (male and female) as image of God is in covenant with the triune God for eternity.

5) All people know the true God, and that knowledge entails covenantal obligations.

6) Those who are and remain in Adam suppress the truth that they know. Those who are in Christ see truth for what it is.

7) There is an absolute, covenantal antithesis between Christian theism and any other, opposing position. Thus, Christianity is true and anything opposing it is false.

8) Suppression of the truth, like the depravity of sin, is total but not absolute. Thus every unbelieving position will necessarily have within it ideas, concepts, notions, and the like that it has taken and wrenched from their true, Christian context.

9) The true, covenantal knowledge of God in man, together with God’s universal mercy, allows for persuasion in apologetics.

10) Every fact and experience is what it is by virtue of the covenantal, all-controlling plan and purpose of God.

Oliphint then proceeds to examine, throughout the course of his book, a number of the biblical passages most relevant to apologetics: Acts 17, Romans 1 and 2, Colossians 2, I Corinthians 2, II Corinthians 10, I Peter 3, etc. His treatment of these is more organic than discrete, ranging through the book, making the book worthwhile just on these grounds. But Oliphint does more. Within the context of setting forth the tenets and dimensions of his covenantal apologetics, and dealing with the most relevant Scripture passages, he engages in several key dialogs in which he employs his method: the first with a secular humanist defending the scientific method as the arbiter of all truth (111-122); the second with an atheist raising the problem of evil (180-191); the third with Darwinian evolutionist Daniel Dennett (210-217); and the last with a Muslim (235-257).

Oliphint does a masterful internal critique of each of his opponents, showing the first that the scientific method cannot account for itself; the second, that the problem of evil can be understood within a Christian worldview (though not outside of it); the third, that the Darwinist is not able to account for the irrational giving rise to the rational; and the last that, Islam enslaves Allah and is irrational. He says much more than this, of course, (so please get the book and read it!), but these dialogs are an excellent application of the Van Tilian method that he is setting forth in this book. Oliphint seeks to set forth his approach with an eye to logos, ethos, and pathos, taking Aristotle's rhetorical approach and putting it to good use here. He shows us how to present the truth in a way that takes proper account of the person in context and to seek to do so in a persuasive way. I can at this point either say a great deal more about this book or simply stop here and recommend that all readers acquire this book and read it carefully. I choose to do the latter: *tolle, lege!*

Alan D. Strange

Eugene H. Peterson. *The Pastor: A Memoir*. HarperOne: New York, NY: 2011. Pp. 336. \$25.99 (cloth).

The pastoral ministry is hard, and lonely. Emotionally we are often isolated, struggling with our own insecurities, and the problems of the Church weigh heavy upon our hearts. Not many people understand the weight, desires, struggles, burdens, and yes, joys of the pastoral ministry. But in Eugene Peterson's autobiography pastors will find a fellow-pastor who understands the difficulties and trials, as well as the triumphs of ministry. Readers will not agree with every aspect of Peterson's approach to ministry but will find

many encouraging and helpful insights that will inspire and motivate them. I will give a couple of examples to illustrate.

“This book,” explains Peterson in the Introduction, “is the story of my formation as a pastor and how the vocation of pastor formed me. I had never planned to be a pastor, never was aware of any inclination to be a pastor, never ‘knew what I was going to be when I grew up.’ And then—at the time it seemed to arrive abruptly—there it was: Pastor” (p.2). Here we have the central focus of the memoir. As the author retells his life-story, he focuses on explaining what it means to be a pastor.

The need for an honest exploration of pastoral vocation and identity cannot be greater. As Peterson himself explains:

North American culture does not offer congenial conditions in which to live vocationally as a pastor...I love being an American. I love this place in which I have been placed—it’s language, its history, its energy. But I don’t love “the American way,” its culture and values. I don’t love the rampant consumerism that treats God as a product to be marketed. I don’t love the dehumanizing ways that turn men, women, and children into impersonal roles and causes and statistics. I don’t love the competitive spirit that treats others as rivals and even as enemies. The cultural conditions in which I am immersed require, at least for me, a kind of fierce vigilance to guard my vocation from the cultural pollutants so dangerously toxic to persons who want to follow Jesus in the way that he is Jesus. I wanted my life, both my personal and working life, to be shaped by God and the scriptures and prayer (pp. 4-5).

Every faithful pastor’s heart echoes these sentiments. Indeed the battle is fierce to remain faithful to our calling and not to prostitute it in the search of our own glory turning God and people into mere means to an end.

This kind of glory-seeking in ministry is renounced over and over again by Peterson. One example comes much later in the story, when he articulates the central work of pastoral ministry as “pointing away from yourself to something other than you.” As he explains to two students interested in ministry:

You are at your pastoral best when you are not noticed. To keep this vocation healthy requires constant self-negation, getting out of the way. A certain blessed anonymity is inherent in pastoral work. For pastors, being noticed easily develops into *wanting* to be noticed. Many years earlier a pastor friend told me that pastoral ego “has the reek of

disease about it, the relentless smell of the self.” I’ve never forgotten that (pp. 292).

In an age of celebrity pastor’s the desire for fame and popularity is almost ever-present. These words are, therefore, as sobering as they are challenging. They capture the Christ-like mind that should mark every pastor!

As is clear from these quotes, pastors will be challenged to examine their own approach to pastoral ministry as they travel with Eugene Peterson through the ups and downs of his life and ministry. As you make this journey with him you will come to know him as a friend and mentor. I can highly recommend this book.

Jacques Roets