

BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

William Ames. *A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism*. Translated by Todd M. Rester. Classic Reformed Theology, Volume 1, R. Scott Clark, general editor. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009. Pp. 253. \$40.00 (cloth)

A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism is the first volume in the Classic Reformed Theology series that is being edited by Dr. R. Scott Clark. This book contains the lectures of the English Puritan, William Ames, on the Heidelberg Catechism. There is an introduction to William Ames by Joel R. Beeke and Todd M. Rester.

The goal of this new series is to provide fresh translations of classic works of Reformed theology from the era of orthodoxy. It is lamentable that Clark can state in the preface to this series that “the list of scholars who have extensive, firsthand knowledge of some of the most important primary texts in the study of Reformed orthodoxy (e.g., the major works of Olevianus, Polanus, Voetius, Cocceius, Heidegger, and van Mastricht, to name but a few) can be counted easily” (xi). While most of the texts in this series will appear in English for the first time, Ames’ *A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism* was translated into English in 1659. A number of problems with this early translation and the fact that it had been out of circulation for three hundred years led to the decision to provide a new, fresh translation that is faithful to Ames’ words and citations. The translator is a gifted Latinist who is in the process of translating Petrus van Mastricht’s systematic theology for the Dutch Translation Society.

William Ames is a remarkable figure in the history of Reformed orthodoxy because he was an English Puritan who spent the last two decades of his life as a minister and professor of theology in the Netherlands. In his writings we find cross-pollination between the theology of the English Puritans and the Dutch Reformed. Having fled persecution in England, he arrived in the Netherlands in 1610. This remarkable Puritan became the chief theological advisor and secretary to the presiding officer at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). He was known as “the hammer of the Arminians.” Ames is best known for his *Marrow of Theology*, a work of systematic theology that became the standard textbook for the New England Puritans.

Due to his Puritanism and his Ramistic approach to theology, Ames promoted practical Christian piety. This could help one to understand how Ames’ might be attracted to the warm-hearted piety found in the Heidelberg Catechism. Ames’ commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism is of special interest with respect to cross-pollination between the English

Puritans and the Dutch Reformed because we have a Puritan commenting on a continental confessional document that was one of the Three Forms of Unity in the Dutch Reformed churches. In 1659 *A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism* was translated into English.

A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism is also of interest because it points to the important role that Latin translations of Scripture played in the era of orthodoxy. Little research has been done on the Latin Bible used by Ames and the orthodox Reformed. Ames used the 1607 Tremellius-Junius-Beza *Biblia Sacra*. The Latin translation is of interest because Ames' lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism are basically exegesis of key biblical texts that teach the unique doctrine found in each Lord's Day. The Appendix helpfully provides Ames's translations of the texts side by side with the Latin translation in the Beza NT and the Tremellius-Junius OT & NT.

Ames' book on the Heidelberg Catechism originated from lectures that he gave as a private tutor to seminary students. Following the Synod of Dort, Ames was unable to become a professor at Leiden University in the Netherlands due to pressure that the English authorities and King James placed upon the Dutch. To support his family, he ran a "house college" in Leiden where he lectured on the Heidelberg Catechism. Following Ames' death, friends had these lectures published in 1635 to provide for his impoverished widow and children.

Personally, I could wish that Ames had been less of a Puritan and more willing to interact with the text of the Heidelberg Catechism. The chapters found in this book are individual lectures on each of the Lord's Days, but the text of the Catechism is barely mentioned. In the history of the Dutch Reformed church there have been two mind-sets when it came to preaching on the Lord's Days. Some preachers tended to stick to the text of the Catechism in their catechetical preaching while others placed more of an emphasis on a relevant biblical text. Clearly Ames is of the latter camp. His lectures do demonstrate that the teaching of the Catechism flows out of Scripture. The fact that he hardly mentions the Apostle's Creed in his lectures on Lord's Days 7 to 20 also seems odd. This is not to say that Ames isn't helpful for the Reformed preacher. It would be fruitful for a pastor to preach through the Catechism while selecting the same texts that Ames did and benefiting from the Puritan's insights.

In *A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism* we find a pious Puritan using the logical ordering of a Ramist to teach the doctrine and piety found in the Heidelberg Catechism. The use of biblical texts as the jumping off point for teaching the doctrine in each Lord's Day does result in a work that shows that Reformed theology and practice is truly evangelical and catholic and biblical. The Lord's Day is not even cited at the beginning of each chapter.

But Ames' work is not just of historical interest. In a day when many ministers are not logically organizing their sermons at all, this work shows the benefit of order and structure (even if one thinks that Ramism went a bit overboard). I recently read a book in which the author lamented that in confessional Presbyterian churches he rarely heard sermons that had any order or structure.

Let us take a brief look at three chapters in the book; Lord's Days 1, 10, and 38. The chapter on Lord's Day 1 is of interest because of the doctrines that Ames develops in relation to it. He selected Psalm 4:6-8 for the biblical text. Traditionally the dominant theme in discussions of Lord's Day 1 has been that of the Christian's "only comfort." While Ames does mention the "consolation" of the Christian at a number of points, this opening chapter might just as well have been an explication of Q. & A. 1 of the Westminster Larger Catechism! I have no doubt that if someone was given the option of guessing whether this chapter was an explication of the first Q. & A. of the Heidelberg Catechism or the first Q. & A. of the Westminster Larger Catechism, that he would select the latter. This does raise interesting questions about possible influence that the Latin version of this book (published in 1635) might have had on the authors of the Westminster Larger Catechism, since the latter document was published in 1646. Ames begins by discussing the highest good (*summum bonum*). Lesson 1 is: "The highest good ought to be considered and sought above all other things in our entire life." Lesson 3 reads: "Our true and highest good consists in the union and communion we have with God." Lesson 4 connects the highest good with the idea of enjoyment: "The joy that believers gain from the communion that they have with God overcomes, by its own sweetness, all human delights and happiness." The Westminster Larger Catechism famously begins: "What is the chief and *highest end* of man? Ans. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to *enjoy* him for ever." Clearly the point of connection between Ames' focus on the highest good and Lord's Day 1 is found in the second Q. & A. that asks the remarkable question: "How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, *enjoying* this comfort, mayest live and die *happily*?" Those who have the triple knowledge of sin, salvation, and service are truly *blessed*. I have preached on Q. & A. 2 while emphasizing similar truths. The truths in the opening questions of the Westminster Larger Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism have intriguing connections. The "new Calvinists," influenced by John Piper's "Christian hedonism," would find Ames' chapter on Lord's Day 1 stimulating.

Ames does conclude the first chapter by mentioning the Christian's comfort in the last "use" of Lesson 5: "For the *consolation* of the faithful, because from this foundation all their cares can and should be rolled off onto God, in order to demolish all the anxieties that impede them and cause them to cling to God with less joy" (11).

Lord's Day 10, which is on the topic of divine providence, is of interest because Ames uses Romans 11:36, "*For from Him, and through Him, and in Him all things exist*" to defend the doctrine of meticulous providence. In this discussion there is clear influence from Calvin in Ames' emphasis on the fact that God directs all things to His own glory. One reason why all creatures must be directed by divine providence is that God is leading them to a goal. Defending meticulous providence, Ames argues that God's providence extends also to "contingent and voluntary things." Jonathan Edwards is clearly in the same tradition as Ames who writes: "This providence extends not only to necessary things but also to contingent and voluntary things, because the

contingent things are changeable and liable to accidents (*casibus*) especially require a governor of superior power, so that they may be rightly set in order and so that all things may not fall headlong into confusion" (57-58). But Ames is not a fatalist: "For there is nothing in the providence of God that imposes a necessity to things properly so called, but only a certainty that is in no way incompatible with contingency or the liberty of nature" (58) God is sovereign over the sinful choices of His creatures: "The greatest confusion and disorder exists in sins, so it is especially necessary for God to exercise the force of His own providence at that point. His only regard for evil has some intention of good, inasmuch as evil is set in order and converted into good by Him" (58). Given the popularity of various forms of Arminian theology and the Openness of God theology, confessionally Reformed churches can benefit from the exegesis and teaching of the orthodox Reformed on meticulous providence.

Lord's Day 38, which discusses the fourth commandment, is of interest because Ames, as Rector and professor of Theology at Franeker University, encouraged piety by enforcing Sabbath observance. Calvin's view of the Sabbath was basically reflected in the original form of the Heidelberg Catechism as composed by Ursinus and Olevianus. Originally the Catechism did not include the word "rest" or "Sabbath"; rather Sunday was called a "festive day." The Synod of Dort approved a change from "festive day of rest" to "the Sabbath, that is, the day of rest." Ursinus did not think that Christians were tied down to Sunday. He also wrote: "Hence the Sabbath, in as far as it has respect to the seventh day, was, together with other ceremonies and types, fulfilled and abolished by the coming of the Messiah." The *Post-acta* of the Synod of Dort said: "IV. The Jewish Sabbath having been abolished, Christians must solemnly keep Sunday holy." Article VI expresses a strong sabbatical doctrine: "This day must be set aside for worship that on it people may rest from all ordinary labors (excluding those which love and present necessity demand) together with all such recreations that hinder worship." In line with the Synod of Dort, Ames argues that the fourth commandment "is a moral and perpetual duty (*juris*) so that we may observe one day in seven, which among us is the Lord's Day" (170). About Sunday, Ames says "Christ has constituted this day, because on this day He rested from His own afflictions" (171). Lesson three in this chapter is "One part of our duty is that we should cease from all our work on the Lord's Day." The "use" that Ames makes of this doctrine is: "For *reproof* against those who so easily violate the rest of this day, either with their own vulgar occupations; or commerce; or amusements; or, finally, with elaborate and luxurious banquets" (172). Ames' teaching on the fourth commandment is of interest because of his desire for Puritan piety and the fact that as a professor in a Dutch Reformed theological school he advocated a pious observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day.

This book is a promising beginning to the new Classic Reformed Theology series. One can only hope that confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian churches will look back to the orthodox Reformed as they move forward in developing a systematic and practical theology for the twenty-first century.

—Nathan Brummel

Michael F. Bird. *Introducing Paul*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. Pp.192. \$20.00

With all of the recent study analyzing Paul and the details of Paul's teaching, along with the debates surrounding Pauline theology and what he "really said," one might wonder whether there is room for a rather brief overview introducing Paul. After reading Bird's well-written and engaging book, it can be concluded that there is a place for such a work. As Bird argues, Paul is a fitting subject for investigation and important to comprehend, for one can hardly grasp the teaching of the New Testament while ignoring the 24% of it contributed by Paul. Furthermore, Bird points out that times of reformation and revival have historically found "their catalyst in fresh encounters with the apostle" (13). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is in understanding Paul better that the church better understands the Lord he served.

The value of the book is in Bird's ability to produce a volume that exhibits both breadth and simplicity in exploring and summarizing areas of Pauline study while also maintaining an appropriate depth for a work of introduction. Bird appears to have achieved his explicit aim to go deeper into Paul without losing his readers in the mire of scholarly debates and complex technicalities, while also hoping to show Paul both relevant and riveting to today's church (6).

Bird's book is well-structured and logically ordered. He begins Chapter 1 by asking, in language taken from Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 3:5, what is Paul? In offering an answer, Bird explores five images of Paul reflected in the New Testament: persecutor, missionary, theologian, pastor, and martyr. He concludes by adding the description of Paul as a maverick who was capable of inspiring deep devotion as well as violent opposition. In the second chapter, Bird examines Paul's Damascus Road experience and the central role it played in his life and teaching. In the third chapter, he provides a brief outline and summary of Paul's letters, including a helpful central theme or motif for each epistle.

Bird then moves on to explore Paul's articulation of the gospel in Chapter 4, taking an extended look at both 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 and Romans 1:1-4 with 2 Timothy 2:8. In Chapter 6, Bird considers the crux of the gospel and related concepts such as righteousness, sacrifice, reconciliation, redemption, adoption, and renewal. Chapter 7 contains an excellent summary of Pauline eschatology and its importance in understanding the overall theology of Paul. Bird rightly asserts that according to Paul, the new age has broken into the present with the resurrection of Jesus and the pouring out of the Spirit so that the believer participates in the age to come now while yet awaiting its consummation. He admits an appreciation for George Eldon Ladd's work on eschatology and betrays a lingering influence in his historic premillennial interpretations of 1 Corinthians 15:23-25 and Revelation 20:1-10 (121).

Bird next considers what he, following N. T. Wright, refers to as messianic monotheism, and examines passages such as Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20 to illustrate Paul's affirmation of Christ's deity. In Chapter 9, Bird turns to a consideration of Paul's ethics while noting

that while truth matters to Paul, behavior, actions, attitudes, and lifestyle are also deep concerns for the apostle (135). In this context, Bird examines Paul's positions on Christian liberty, homosexuality, and the role of women in the church. In the final chapter, he explores Paul's spirituality, employing two phrases—cruciformity and anastasisity—to reflect Paul's emphasis on both the cross and the resurrection as a way of life. In a concluding epilogue, Bird admits limitations inherent in studying Paul, but also restates the importance of understanding Paul in order to understand Jesus, as well as the importance of applying his teachings at a time in which the church looks increasingly like the church in Paul's day.

The book is commendable for a number of reasons. For starters, he refuses to fall in line with critical approaches to biblical study, rejecting liberal conclusions at several points. For example, he regards the source of Paul's theology as primarily the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus transmitted through the early church instead of labeling Paul a Hellenist, a Stoic, or a Gnostic (20-21); he defends a consistency and unity in Paul's teaching, though allowing for some development and maturation (23); he refutes the notion that Paul plays off the "Christ of Faith" against the "Jesus of History" (55); and he defends the feasibility of Pauline authorship of the pastoral epistles (71 footnote). Along these lines, he accepts the Bible on its own terms and reads believingly. For instance, he speaks not merely of Paul's *belief* in an encounter with the Risen Christ, but forthrightly of Paul's actual encounter with the Risen Christ (37).

Other aspects of the book worthy of appreciation include: seeing the New Testament church as the fulfillment of Israel rather than adopting a dispensational view of the people of God (56); a concern that the resurrection and the parousia not be regarded as afterthoughts but as central to understanding the scope of the Good News (76); opposing an adoptionistic reading of Romans 1:1-4 (82); maintaining that being saved encompasses more than just going to heaven instead of hell when you die because salvation involves the present work of the Spirit conforming the believer into the image of Christ (110-111); affirming that the ethical imperatives of Paul must be read as flowing from the gospel indicatives (136-138); and upholding the interpretation that Paul condemns the practice of homosexuality as a sin (157-158). In addition, Bird's considerations of the first-century background of Paul's writings are often beneficial and insightful, especially his treatment of the significance of proclaiming Jesus as Lord in the Roman Empire (83-90). At other times, however, conclusions drawn from the presumed historical context are questionable.

There are some weaknesses to note. First, Bird has a tendency to overstate his case at times. For example, he alleges at the outset that Paul "slips through our fingers" and that trying to nail him down can be like "attempting to nail jelly to a wall" (12). He then proceeds to write 160 pages explaining the man, his mission and message with a supposed degree of accuracy and comprehension. He also claims that Paul's letters were written to people in "environs altogether different" from ours (14),

but then argues for Paul's contemporary relevance in a world increasingly conforming to the ancient world of Paul, subsequently noting that the issues Paul deals with are as applicable to our day as much as to his own time.

Second, Bird appears to give preference to a biblical-theological approach to the Scriptures at the expense of systematic theology. He maintains that Paul's writings should not be regarded as "deposits of theological dogma" (13), that a fresh encounter with Paul will leave one's "theological world turned upside down" (15), and that while there is an "inner logic about the gospel ... the gospel at its core is a story" (77). This preference is also strongly implied in Bird's assertion that "Beliefs and doctrines are not forged amid a list of propositions and by logical inferences, but in the telling of a story" (39). While his biblical-theological approach can be embraced, there is no reason to pit biblical theology against systematic theology. Indeed, affirming the vital role biblical theology plays in understanding the Scriptures need not, and must not, require undermining the value of systematic theology.

In fact, his subtle slightings of systematics actually constitute additional instances of overstating his case. For example, after asserting that beliefs and doctrines are not forged amid lists of propositions and logical inferences, he intentionally and overtly displays the logical order of thought in Romans 5:12-21 with a list of propositional truths (41). He makes a similar statement about the problems inherent in articulating the gospel as a set of linear propositions in need of *resolution* rather than as the fulfillment of a redemptive-historical story (74-75), and then proceeds to speak of the law finding its *resolution* in Christ (76). Indeed, his assessment that "we should seek to get inside the story of the gospel and to exposit the full theological significance of the story and what it tells about God, human beings and salvation" (78) seems to demand the systematic disciplines of, at least, theology proper, anthropology, Christology, and pneumatology, respectively. One final consideration related to overstatement is in order: one has to wonder if, according to Bird, a "fresh" reading of Paul requires dispensing with the Reformed Confessions since Paul turns our theological world "upside down..

Third, Bird is less than precise in some of his theological formulations. He fails to explicitly affirm *a covenant of works* that Adam failed to keep and that Jesus fulfilled as the Last Adam. Consequently, his view of the representation of both Adam and Christ is not altogether clear. For example, his statements on the relationship between Adam's sin and the sin of his descendents as "re-enactments and ratifications" are quite obscure (42). He later refers to representation as involving certain "associations," but what does that mean specifically (69)?

In the vein of this imprecision, Bird fails to offer any explicit comment on the New Perspective on Paul. He never even mentions it by name. He does, however, employ language common to the New Perspective, referring to the "covenant marker of circumcision" (33), emphasizing ethnic barriers (47) and regarding the distinctive practices of the law as circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, and dietary laws (140). In addition, he

frequently cites New Perspective adherents favorably, most notably N. T. Wright and James D. G. Dunn, along with others.

In considering Bird's views on justification, he rejects a caricature that regards God as some kind of cosmic accountant who needs the scales to be balanced (75). He admits that Jesus' obedience and faithfulness genuinely affect (note that he does not say *effect*) our salvation, but he fails to elaborate on how they affect our salvation exactly. To be fair, he does affirm that Christ's faithfulness and obedience become ours when we are united to Jesus by faith and so that believers "partake" of his righteousness (75); and he concludes that the "imputation of Christ's righteousness is a necessary and logical inference to make" (97). Ultimately, he argues for an understanding of the "righteousness of God" richer than a mere righteousness imputed by faith (94), which, in itself, is an agreeable assertion. Indeed, one may hold that the "righteousness of God" is *more* than an imputed righteousness, but to hold that it is less than or wholly other than that is problematic. In the end, the seriousness of the current debates concerning Pauline theology calls for more forthrightness and precision from Bird.

Fifth, Bird denies the continuing significance of the Decalogue as a source for New Testament imperatives (148), which, according to Bird, find their source in the example of Jesus, the teaching of Jesus, life in the Spirit, and the law of love. He asserts that the traditional Reformed division between the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws was not shared by Jews and that many Old Testament laws cannot neatly or easily be placed in one category over another. In addition, Bird observes that moral law is found outside the Decalogue in the Old Testament.

While these assertions are true, it must be remembered that the Decalogue was set apart, it alone of all the law being written by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). Furthermore, an understanding of Christ's sinlessness (Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22) requires more than believing that he *fulfilled* the Old Testament shadows of the ceremonial law but that he *kept* the moral law of God. If this is true, and if we are being conformed to the image of Christ, as Bird maintains (56, 111), then we are being conformed to the Perfect Lawkeeper who kept the whole law, including the Decalogue. One can hardly deduce, then, that the Decalogue has no abiding relevance in the ethical life of the Christian. Indeed, Ephesians 6:1-2, ignored by Bird, suggests otherwise. Additionally, if the moral law is understood as a reflection of God's own character, then the moral components found in the Old Testament cannot be severed from the ethical exhortations found in the New Testament. Indeed, the essence of the moral law in *both* the Old Testament and the New Testament is love for God and love for neighbor.

Despite these weaknesses, Bird's introduction to Paul should still be regarded as a decidedly profitable work overall that contains valuable content about Paul and his teaching, helpful insights, and some sound exegesis. Bird has provided an instructive and readily digestible introduction to Paul and his theology that, when read with discernment and a sensitivity to broader issues in the area of Pauline studies, can inform the intellect as well as nourish the soul.

—Brian Allred

Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing Scripture: the Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009. Pp. 293. \$18.00

Manfred Brauch has an admirable goal: he hopes that all Christians could just get along together and read the Bible correctly, without letting biases or theological agendas get in the way of hearing what the Bible is truly saying. In giving the Bible to a human race that has fallen into sin, God was entrusting his Word to abuse and misuse that is the result of our sinful (both personal and communal) blinders. Such blinders cause us to misunderstand and misconstrue what the written text of the Bible says. When the Bible's message is distorted *by Christians themselves*, especially before the eyes of a skeptical, post-modern world, the gospel gets discredited, Christianity is marginalized, and God's message for the world is ignored. This forms a great deal of the burden that Brauch has in writing this book.

Manfred Brauch was professor of biblical theology (now retired) and past president of Palmer Theological Seminary (formerly Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In his earlier work, *Hard Sayings of Paul* (InterVarsity Press, 1989), he took on the "hard" texts, and he has also contributed, along with W.C. Kaiser, F.F. Bruce, and P.H. Davids, to the much larger book *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (InterVarsity Press, 1996).

The author uses the term "abuse" in his book title with very definite intentions. In the introduction he defines "Scripture abuse" as interpreting and applying the Bible in "questionable and irresponsible ways" (15). Such abuse may be either intentional or unintentional. In either case, damage is done, and that abuse of Scripture and its message contributes, even in small ways, to the brokenness in the world today. Christians that claim a high view of inspiration and Scriptural authority have a greater responsibility to treat the Bible and its many texts in a very careful, balanced, and responsible way. He writes, "Those who affirm the Bible as the Word of God, inspired and authoritative for Christian faith, life, and presence in the world, must be true to those convictions when interpreting and applying the Word" (17). To whom much is given, much is required. And those who confess the strongest things about the Bible must be greatly on guard in handling the Bible in interpretation.

Brauch lays out his book in eight chapters, followed by five appendices. Chapter one deals with the nature of Scripture, while chapters two through seven focus on the varieties of abuse that Brauch witnesses occurring in the Christian world throughout church history. Chapter eight is his concluding "reflections and challenges." The appendices deal with a discussion of a variety of topics. The first appendix deals with the question of personal salvation and the Social Gospel—with Brauch affirming that both are addressed in the Bible and imbalance results when either one is neglected. Rauschenbusch, Carl Henry, and Ronald Sider are cited. Appendix B comments on the "views of women in intertestamental Judaism and early Christianity" (261ff.). Brauch here argues that early on in rabbinic Judaism women were relegated to a subordinate role in the religious and civic community and early Christianity largely followed

this tradition. Appendix C outlines Augustine's (which is the traditional) just-war theory. Appendix D is the text and signatories of the July 2007 letter to President Bush from evangelical American leaders. The final appendix provides an "expanded translation/interpretation" of Ephesians 5:21-33, based on Brauch's discussion of the passage in chapters five and six of his book.

Throughout the book Brauch returns to three large issues (20, 21) to examine how the several kinds of abuse have been at play in these issues. These issues are (1) the use and justification of force in human affairs; (2) the relationship between men and women in home, church, and society; and (3) the concern for justice and the sanctity of life in all areas of human society. These can be "hot button" topics, to be sure. But Brauch believes that the Christian community, both its conservative and liberal branches, is guilty of abusing Scripture as the various sides argue for the legitimacy of their own point of view. Brauch writes, "It is a lack of the use of biblically grounded and sound principles, which are carefully and consistently applied in this process of discernment that leads to the abusive reading and application of the Bible" (210).

But what does Brauch personally affirm about the Bible, the Scriptural text itself? He clearly affirms that the Bible is divinely-inspired (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16). Yet, he also draws attention to the question of why the Bible is inspired. 2 Timothy 3:17 "teaches that God's inspiration in and through Scripture provides for us the knowledge and guidance that is intended to bring about salvation and the renewal of life and the world, through faith in Jesus Christ" (27). Therefore, all other questions about science, history, politics, etc., are beyond the intention of the Bible. Beyond that, the incident recorded in Acts 8 where Philip encounters the Ethiopian is "very instructive" in that Philip interprets Isaiah 53 as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. On this basis Brauch insists on a "Christocentric hermeneutic," which he more fully develops in chapters 6-8 (27).

Proper hermeneutical principles need to guide any and all Christian interpretation. Brauch focuses on two larger principles, namely, the *intention* of the Scriptural text and the *incarnation* of the Word in the Person of Jesus Christ. In both Scripture and in the incarnation of Christ the divine enters into history and into the world of human weaknesses and limitations. Such accommodation by God is performed so that we might understand what God is saying.

Brauch draws an analogy between the incarnation of the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ and the Bible (28ff., 202f.). The author appeals to Bernard Ramm (*Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 1961, 33) when he says that the inspiration of the Bible, like the incarnation of Christ, now causes revelation to come to us "in a humbled, lowered form." But this comparison between the incarnation and inspiration of the Bible (often made) will not work for Brauch or us as neatly as first thought. In the incarnation of God the Son, the divine nature and the human nature are joined in one Person. All that belongs to the two natures is present in the Person of the God-man Mediator. The natures are not separated, confused, or mixed. Each nature retains its distinct properties as nature. But in the Bible, what is divine and what is human? Are the words hu-

man while the message is divine? Is the syntax human but the thoughts divine? Is there an historical husk “hiding” or covering over a divine kernel? Brauch assumes that the incarnation is an appropriate analogy, but he does not seem aware of any pitfalls in making this assumption.

In any case, the fact that the divine word is now given to us in the Bible causes “tensions” to exist at times. Jesus himself encountered problems with his contemporaries who could not accept the fact that he was the divine Logos. Faith was needed to see the glory of God in Jesus Christ (30). Thus both the incarnation and the Bible leave us with “ultimately a paradox and mystery” when the divine and the human are placed next to each other (31). Says Brauch, “It [the Bible] is fully human, with all that this implies regarding the presence of limitation, and it is fully divine, with all that this implies about its inspiration and authority” (31). It is in this context that Brauch pursues the question of the Bible’s intention and overall message, one which must not be abused by the Bible’s handlers.

The second chapter deals with the abuse of the “whole gospel.” Here Brauch declares a plague on both houses, namely, those Christians who pit personal salvation against the so-called Social Gospel, the message of the Bible that relates to social and communal matters. Both matters are addressed, and neither concern must be slighted. Brauch notes that the Old Testament prophets as well as our Lord spoke up vigorously about matters that involved personal sin and corporate injustice. He writes: “There is no room here for the either-or of personal gospel or social gospel, of the ‘saving of souls’ or the transformation of sinful structures, of personal justification or work for justice. The personal gospel and the social gospel are part of a seamless robe, two sides of the same garment. From the perspective of the whole gospel, you cannot have one without the other” (43).

His advice for avoiding such abuse of the whole gospel? He offers three points of admonition (45): (1) just don’t do it! (easier said than done); (2) apply the whole of yourself to the study of Scripture, and the whole result of that study to yourself; and (3) if your vocation calls you to focus on one side of the gospel, make space to support the other side. Each of his chapters, wherein the author sets forth a discussion of possible abuse, concludes with Brauch spelling out what he believes are helpful guidelines to avoid that specific type of abuse.

Chapters three and four address the abuse of selectivity and abuse of biblical balance, respectively. Abuse of selectivity concerns picking certain texts from Scripture to support one’s position while ignoring texts that clearly oppose one’s position. After all, Brauch believes that in a number of places texts stand in “tension” (his term) with each other. Coupled with this may be the reinterpretation of texts that are in opposition to one’s position, putting content into those passages so as to make them say what they originally did not say. Here Brauch discusses two principal issues, namely, the relationship between men and women, as well as the connection between biblical blessing and wealth (prosperity).

The abuse of biblical balance, on the other hand, focuses on an emphasis on “certain biblical doctrines, perspectives, teachings, themes or

mandates, while ignoring or minimizing the equal, or even greater, importance of complementary ones” (81). Under this topic Brauch discusses a tendency among some conservative Christians to rank certain sins as greater or more grievous than others, especially when the sin involves some physical dimension (e.g., sexual sins), while other sins of a more social nature may be viewed as less serious. He also draws attention to the need to maintain biblical truth along with personal humility. While Brauch’s discussion here is, in the main, very helpful, he connects the concern of the Torah for the loving treatment of the alien in Leviticus 19:33-34 with the problem of illegal immigration in the United States (88ff.). The connection here is rather thin, in this reviewer’s mind, since the Torah is addressed to the covenant community of the Lord while the question of illegal immigration is on a different level. Of course, the law of the Lord teaches us to exhibit justice and compassion, but the teaching of the Torah does not say that loving the alien means that countries should open the borders with little concern for the security of the nation.

Chapter five addresses the abuse of words. Brauch points out how an author will encode in the words he chooses the meanings that pertain to the culture, time, and situation known to the author and his original audience. Other audiences in later times and in different historical and cultural settings may not be able to unpack and “de-code” what the original author intended. Brauch discusses the term “helper” from Genesis 2:18, 20, and adequately shows that the term is in no way demeaning to the woman. But then Brauch goes on to analyze the cursedness of “pain” and “toil” from Genesis 3. Brauch (129ff.) makes the serious charge that the Apostle Paul’s interpretation of the fall in 1 Timothy 2:14 is “clearly based on a very partial, one-sided reading of the text in Genesis 3.” Paul does so by adopting the tradition Jewish interpretation that blames the woman for the fall of the human race into sin.

One might well ask Brauch at this point: are the words of the Apostle Paul on this matter still inspired or not? Does Paul speak the Word of God with authority or not? It is one thing to claim that the Bible is the divinely inspired revelation from God when the teaching and text favor the beliefs and practices we favor, but then when the text impinges upon us at points where we disagree with it, one cannot escape by claiming that the inspired writer of Scripture is reading the text in a “partial, one-sided” manner. One wonders whether Brauch does not fall into the practice of the very abuse he has been addressing throughout this book.

Brauch comes back repeatedly to the issue of man-woman relationships and how the Bible has been misread for the past two millennia. In the same chapter he takes on the meaning of the term *kephalē*. Brauch argues strenuously for the word *kephalē* to mean “source” and not “head,” as in the sense of leadership or authority over another, which has been the traditional understanding of the term throughout two millennia of Christian church history and centuries of biblical interpretation. If *kephalē* means source and not head, then Ephesians 5 comes out sounding quite different from a traditional view. Christ is seen as the source of the church, analogous to the man as the source of the woman, specifically the source of strength and nourishment. From the head

comes the nourishment that the rest of the body needs. Paul, asserts Brauch, did not envision male headship in the sense of a man having authority over his wife. The relationship between Christ and the church, and between a husband and a wife, is one of mutual service and loving devotion. This is the nature of mutual submission that the Apostle Paul envisions in Ephesians 5:21. Paul is not thinking about authority structures at all in Ephesians 5 (139). Brauch claims that this understanding of *kephalē* is evident from classical Greek literature and also from the Septuagint.

In responding to Brauch, the following should be noted. While it is the case that Christian love and devotion must be both sincere and mutual, Brauch misses, ignores, or overlooks the specifics of what Ephesians 5:22ff. is revealing in the light of the whole Bible. His argument does not stand in the larger context of Scriptural teaching. Brauch dismisses Wayne Grudem's arguments for understanding *kephalē* as head (in the sense of leader) in a footnote (136, fn 38) by agreeing with Gordon Fee's conclusion. Fee's critique is of Grudem's 1985 article in the *Trinity Journal*. What Brauch does not do is respond, point by point, to Grudem's 1991 discussion in his edited book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: a Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Crossway Books, 1991).

The case for male leadership in marriage and in the church (to limit the discussion there for the moment) has been made in many other places. One place to examine the several arguments is in the anthology of articles edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: a Response to Evangelical Feminism*, mentioned above. Grudem specifically examines the arguments regarding the meaning of *kephalē* as "head" and/or "source," in both Greek literature over the centuries as well as its use in the Septuagint. Grudem also takes on many of his published critics and those who have reviewed Grudem's earlier writing on this subject (e.g., R. S. Cervin, the Mickelsens, P. Payne, G. Fee, C. C. Kroeger, R. Tucker, G. Bilezikian, etc.).

In short, the word *kephalē* is an acceptable translation for the Hebrew word *rō's*. The primary meaning of *rō's* is "head," the top portion of the human body. An extended or metaphorical meaning is that of leader or chief. Another Greek term used to translate *rō's* in some contexts is *archōn*, a preferred term since it bears the more literal meaning of leader (Grudem, 450, 451). If an argument is raised that says how few times *kephalē* is used in the New Testament to refer to leader or leadership, that is understandable, given the fact that *archōn* is the literal term while *kephalē* is the more metaphorical term. The word *kephalē* is used in passages where the illustration of a group is that of a body. In any case, the term *kephalē* is never used of women.

With *rō's* as a background term for *kephalē*, there are several Old Testament passages where "head" (*rō's*) does mean leader or chief. Examples include Exodus 6:14 (heads of families); 18:25 (leaders of Israelite divisions, where the parallel term is *šārīm*, princes or rulers); 2 Kings 25:18 (temple officers); and Nehemiah 11:17 (leaders of musicians). In Numbers 31:26 the term *rō's* is used to refer to the "heads of the fathers

of the congregation.” Certainly the metaphorical meaning of $\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ (head) is employed. These “heads” are leaders or people who are, in some form or fashion, in charge of another group of people.

Putting the question of male headship in the context of all Scripture yields the following points: in 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9 Paul says that the head of every man ($\alpha\upsilon\delta\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$) is Christ, and the head of a woman/wife is the man/husband ($\acute{o}\ \alpha\upsilon\eta\rho$); in addition, he says that woman was created from man ($\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta\ \acute{\epsilon}\xi\ \alpha\upsilon\delta\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$) and not the man from the woman ($\circ\upsilon\kappa\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\ \alpha\upsilon\eta\rho\ \delta\iota\alpha\ \tau\eta\nu\ \gamma\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha,\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}\ \gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta\ \delta\iota\alpha\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\delta\rho\alpha$).

The Apostle Peter instructs the church along similar lines in 1 Peter 3:1, where he writes, “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands ($\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\acute{\iota}\kappa\epsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \acute{\iota}\delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\delta\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$).” This is said in the context of what he writes in 1 Peter 2:18, where he speaks about submission to governing authorities. The same verb (*hypotassomai*) is used in 1 Peter 3:5-6a, as well as Titus 2:4-5 and Ephesians 5:21, 24 (cf. Colossians 3:18). Ephesians 5:21 speaks of mutual submission, and the verb “submit” governs the clauses of Ephesians 5:22, which speaks of wives [submitting] to their own husbands as to the Lord. This key verb in this discussion is in the middle voice, so that the understanding is that one subjects oneself to another. George Knight III (*Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, 167) notes that Ephesians 5:21 stands as a general admonition with all the members of the Christian community—that verse sets the tone for the whole. No doubt, relationships in the Christian community undergo a radical transformation with the coming of the gospel of Christ and the kingdom of God. But to use verse 21 to undermine the notion of Biblical male headship is unwarranted, given the teaching of Scripture elsewhere.

In 1 Timothy 2:12-13 Paul says that a woman is not to teach or have authority over the man ($\circ\upsilon\kappa\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\tau\rho\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omega\nu,\ \circ\upsilon\delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \alpha\upsilon\theta\epsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\delta\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$). The inspired apostle roots this in the order revealed in Genesis 2, where the man begins his created existence by himself, a situation that God finds to be “not good.” Paul writes to Timothy, “For Adam was made first, then Eve....” While temporal priority in creation is not of itself proof of headship, the leadership of the man is stated in Genesis 3:16, where the Lord God says to the woman that the man *should* govern her. This is *not* a statement of curse or judgment, as Brauch argues, but it is a restatement of what is the creational norm, as Susan Foh quite convincingly argues in her book *Women and the Word of God* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980, 67ff.).

Brauch, on the other hand, understands submission not at all of one willingly placing oneself under authority. He writes, “Rather, the church ‘submits itself to Christ’ (NIV) in the sense of giving itself over to Christ in awe of and response to his self-giving, redemptive, life-giving and life-sustaining love.... The nature of her submission to her husband is not defined by the cultural norm of servant-master, but by the new way of Christ” (151). To be sure, the Christian gospel brings in a new way of relating since Christ came to make all things new again. But one wishes to ask Brauch: still, is it *submission*, also in love, to Christ? Does a wife *submit* to her husband in self-giving love? Why did Paul and Peter use

the verb for submitting when several other words would have more clearly taken the readers of Scripture in the direction that Brauch wishes to take us? Has the church for two millennia been so dense in its reading of the biblical text?

All of this is to say that any abuse of Scripture that is used to denigrate women, their gifts, and their God-given callings in society, church, or home, is never justified. Brauch is correct to be grieved if any Christian has made a most inappropriate appeal to the Bible to suppress or abuse women, who are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) and who are joint heirs of grace in Christ (Gal. 3:28). But abuse of Scripture does not negate a proper use and responsible exegesis of Scripture. The call for full egalitarianism that Brauch issues will not fit in the whole counsel of God as revealed in Scripture.

In chapters six and seven Brauch discusses two types of contextual abuse: literary and theological (chapter six) and historical situation and cultural reality (chapter seven). Any student of exegesis should have had pounded into him or her the idea of keeping context—all contexts—clearly in mind. Brauch here notes how the passage in Matthew 26:52 (living and dying by the sword) was called upon by some Christians to justify going to war. And again Brauch comes back to address the condition of man and woman together in the light of his reading of Genesis 3. He takes on Paul's wording in Romans 7, affirming that Paul is there *not* speaking of Paul the Christian, since that would flatly contradict all that Paul says is true about the Christian who is united to Jesus Christ and is thus a new creation. Without responding to Brauch fully at this point, one might simply ask if the experiential tension that Paul is describing is analogous to the creational groaning portrayed in Romans 8. Christians are indeed new creations, but they do not yet enjoy the full liberation that the final resurrection will bring.

In chapter seven Brauch takes on the question of historical and cultural contexts. He notes that even in the Bible there are "tensions" between what was practiced in Old Testament times and what our Lord affirmed in his earthly ministry. What is ritually prescribed in the Mosaic Torah might be denounced by the Lord and his followers later. One is not always sure if Brauch is choosing his words to provoke a more thoughtful consideration in his readers of these points, or whether he sees genuine and basic tensions, even contradictions, in the flow of redemptive-history. A careful reading of Geerhardus Vos on biblical theology might be in order here. In any case, Brauch (210ff.) sets forth a series of principles that one might keep in mind in deciding what is historically and culturally-limited and what transcends cultures to be applicable even today. Brauch employs a "what would Jesus say/do today" type of interpretive principle. Jesus demonstrated that he was pressing the deepest intentions of the divine code, and Christians should pursue the same kind of concerns. In that light, there must be the repudiation of using force and violence to achieve one's ends. Christian practice must be rooted in biblical precedent (225). What did Jesus do and how did he act? This will greatly assist the Christian community today to sort through many ethical questions.

Several criteria result. First is this: Christ is the center. “God’s ultimate self-disclosure in Christ is the irreducible hermeneutical key,” Brauch writes (229). He adds that “in the written Word of God, whatever *blossoms* in the light of the cross has abiding authority for Christian faith and life and mission; and whatever *withers* in the light of the cross is culturally and historically relative” (229). A second closely-related criterion is this: Jesus’ words and acts (231ff.). Brauch says (239) that this “lived word’ in Jesus’ ministry provides ... a hermeneutical filter” for discerning what remains authoritative and what does not remain authoritative or binding upon Christians today. A third criterion focuses on “prophetic anticipation and apostolic implementation” (240ff.). If the reader senses that we are on subjective ground in all this, he or she would be right.

As noted in the beginning of this review, Brauch’s intention has been to illustrate the several pitfalls of interpretation that have had—and continue to have—in the history of the Christian church. He says, “The main purpose [of his book] has been to lead the reader into and through a variety of ways in which Scripture is misinterpreted, to show how its meaning and message is thereby misunderstood, and to point to significantly negative and often tragic consequences this abuse reading of Scripture can have” (252). He wants to shake things up a bit, to rattle some cages (his imagery). He wonders whether the world might pay more attention to Christianity if Christians themselves would handle the Word of God in a more proper fashion. This reviewer thinks that such is possible but not likely: caricatures and misrepresentations of Christians and Christianity will continue, even in the best of all possible worlds, this side of the eschatological state. Consider this: when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, this only intensified the plotting to kill him. If opponents of Christ are unconverted by the divine resuscitation of a dead body, they will not be moved by the most careful handling of the biblical text. Of course, Christians must treat Scripture with reverence and proper hermeneutics, but we must also be realistic regarding the degree a proper handling of Scripture will change a person who is not moved by the Holy Spirit.

Those who are familiar with the work of D. A. Carson in his book *Exegetical Fallacies* (revised edition, 1996) will note that Carson’s approach is to analyze many technical mistakes that are made in terms of logic and deduction, misuse of evidence from language and history, and general misreading of evidence. Brauch’s approach is from a different angle: he wants to see various abuses as a misreading of the Bible’s larger intention to liberate people from oppression and violence that are inimical to God’s intention in creation and his goal in the recreation that is the focus of Christ’s work. Both Carson and Brauch desire to see exegetes and Christian handlers of the biblical text avoid mistakes that discredit the central message of God. The two authors come at this issue with rather distinct approaches.

The value of Brauch’s book is that he alerts Christians again to the serious mistakes and difficult consequences of taking Scriptural passages out of their contexts. Context, context, context! This contextual reading requires a thorough knowledge of the whole Scripture as well as

a refined listening to its message as understood in the history of the Christian church. At the same time, many of Brauch's own conclusions, even biases, can be critiqued. The book is appreciated for its several caveats, but it also disappoints when it plays off Scripture against Scripture, even Christ "against" Scripture, in that Brauch affirms that "tensions" exist within the Bible and its redemptive-historical flow.

The book concludes with an extensive bibliography of other books and articles, as well as a very complete index of Scripture passages referenced.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Hans Burger. *Being in Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009. Pp. xiii + 632. \$55.00

The author of this doctoral dissertation is minister of the Reformed Church (liberated) in Franeker, the Netherlands. As pastor and theologian, he has sought to combine theory and practice with this investigation of a concept central to Christian dogma, specifically, the *loci* of Christology and soteriology. A number of provocative reasons justify this dissertation study of "being in Christ," not least that this concept lies at the heart of Christian theology and spirituality, and possesses integrating power. Moreover, in our contemporary cultural climate, where many questions involve the identity of the human person, part of the Christian testimony is the biblical-theological component of being in Christ.

The hypothesis of this study is that two concepts are needed for understanding "being in Christ," namely, the Christological theme of representation (the inclusiveness of Christ as our representative, whereby Christ has identified himself with us in his life), and the soteriological idea of participation (our sharing in Christ and in his story). Testing this hypothesis, the author examines these two concepts in close connection with two others: substitution (the exclusiveness of Christ, referring to that activity of Christ for us which we cannot do) and union (the faith-mediated contact between Christ and the believer). The ontological aspects of being in Christ are developed by evaluating the contributions of two historic Reformed theologians, John Owen and Herman Bavinck, two biblical authors, the apostles Paul and John, and two contemporary theologians, Ingolf U. Dalferth and Oliver O'Donovan.

In the Christology of John Owen (1616-1683), two dimensions receive emphasis, namely, Christ as high priest and Christ as bridegroom. In the context of three covenants (covenant of works, covenant of the mediator, and covenant of grace), a representative figure plays a role. Mystical union with Christ begins in the counsel of God, in election, and in the covenant of the mediator—where Christ serves as representative.

The outworking of justification in Owens' soteriology, together with its relationship to regeneration and sanctification, form the matrix for the dimensions of representation and participation, as well as union and substitution. For Owens, the notion of "mystical person" serves to clarify

imputation, in that the union between Christ and the elect constitutes the means whereby the sins of the elect are imputed to Christ as representative, and the moment when the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer.

At the threshold of the twentieth century, Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) wrote his *Reformed Dogmatics*, a trinitarian and christocentric systematic theology. One of its main threads was the *unio mystica cum Christo*, or the believer's mystical union with Christ. The central place of Christ in both creation and redemption, so Bavinck taught, is that Christ is mediator of both creation and redemption. As the head of the new humanity, Christ has surpassed the old Adam, who was head of now-fallen humanity. The intimate relationship between head and body, or the notion of *organism*, lies at the heart of Bavinck's understanding of Christ's identity and function in eternity and in history, in election and in the covenant. Union with Christ is both the prerequisite and the context for the believer's justification, though Bavinck was at the same time careful to distinguish the forensic from the mystical in order to preserve the unique exclusivity of Christ's person and work. In Bavinck's Christology and soteriology we see a careful balance between the exclusiveness of Christ and the inclusiveness of Christ; the former relates to his substitutionary person and work (Christ alone), the latter to the believer's communion with his person and work.

In the author's critical evaluation of the Reformed tradition, in a chapter located somewhat surprisingly before any treatment of Scriptural exegesis, readers are alerted to the theological use of metaphor, or the nature of theology as a grammar of images.

The author turns next to investigate the writings of the apostles Paul and John in connection with the theme of being in Christ. Paul teaches us that being in Christ is an eschatological reality, where already now the cosmic dominion of Jesus Christ is a reality in which believers participate through the Holy Spirit. This reality has a corporate and an existential dimension, pointing to the believer's solidarity with others and to the believer's personal experience of union with Christ. For the apostle John, being in Christ belongs to a framework consisting primarily in the idea of reciprocal inhabitation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and of Jesus Christ and his disciples.

The third section of this work is devoted to analyzing the place of "being in Christ" in the theological work of two contemporary thinkers, Ingolf Dalferth and Oliver O'Donovan. Dalferth is Danforth Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Claremont School of Religion, whose major areas of research and teaching include twentieth-century philosophical and theological hermeneutics, and analytic and phenomenological philosophy of religion. O'Donovan is Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology at the University of Edinburgh.

Central to the theology of both Dalferth and O'Donovan is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The significance of Dalferth's work for investigating the nature of "being in Christ" is his eschatological ontology, while the importance of O'Donovan's contribution lies in his exposition of the

implications of Christ's representation in two directions, namely, that he represents God and God's people.

This English-language dissertation is quite readable, though it remains puzzling that the author cited Dutch-language sources that have been available in English translation for decades (writings of Herman Ridderbos and G. C. Berkouwer, for example). Ignoring the work of John Murray on Romans is another riddle, especially in view of the author's readiness to dispense with the language (image) of imputation in preference for that of participation.

The benefits of Burger's study include his attempt to show the integrative power of the theme of "being in Christ" as a thread capable of uniting Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, spirituality, and ethics. Further, he is interested that Christians appropriate the eschatological dimension of these theological *loci*, including Christology and ecclesiology. As the *eschatos* Adam, Christ inaugurated the new covenant as the climax of a long history. Where the first Adam failed, Christ succeeded, even surpassing the first Adam by conquering the devil, sin, and death, and restoring the image of God. The story of the church, of believers, and the story of Jesus Christ have merged and are continuing until the consummation. Both truths need emphasis, namely, that Christ identifies with us as representative and substitute, and we identify with him, participating in his history.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion. 1541 French Edition*. Trans. Elsie Anne McKee. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Pp. xx + 735, including translators introduction, including indexes of proper names and biblical citations. \$39.00

If there is one theological work for which John Calvin is known, it is undoubtedly his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin's *Institutes* was in the truest sense a work of his entire life, and one that has arguably taken its place as the single most influential theological book written during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Though Calvin's commentaries and sermons are of enduring importance and have been more clearly recognized in more recent Calvin scholarship, the *Institutes* remains his most well-known and significant work.

As the product of a lifetime of theological reflection and writing, the *Institutes* has an interesting history all its own. What began in the first edition of 1536 as a little book of six chapters grew over the course of Calvin's lifetime into a book that in its last Latin edition of 1559 was divided into four books with some eighty chapters. In the words of Bernard Cottret, "[t]he *Institutes* is built over time, a cathedral in which every pillar, every pilaster is endowed with a history" (*Calvin: A Biography*, 310). The growth of Calvin's *Institutes* reflects Calvin's growth as an interpreter of Scripture, student of the church Fathers, and polemical engagement with the theological topics and controversies of the sixteenth century. With each successive edition, Calvin sought to provide his readers a

summary of Scriptural doctrine that would serve as a “handbook” of theological topics. Unlike the earlier Medieval tradition of including “commonplaces” or theological discussions within the framework of Scriptural commentary, Calvin sought to write commentaries that were marked by “lucid brevity” and reserve his theological summary and topical discussion to his *Institutes*.

The history of the *Institutes* includes the following significant editions: the first Latin edition of 1536 (six chapters); a substantially-revised and enlarged Latin edition of 1539, which was printed in Strasbourg and which Calvin declared to “now at last really agree with its title”; a slightly-revised French translation of the second edition in 1541; two editions in 1543 and 1545, which were essentially reprints of the Latin edition of 1539; and a final complete recasting of the *Institutes* in a 1559 Latin edition (the basis for most modern English translations) and a French translation/edition of 1560. Of the last edition, which represents a significant restructuring of the outline of the *Institutes* in four books, which follow broadly the outline of the Apostle’s Creed, Calvin wrote: “The *Institutio Christianae Religionis* newly put out in four books, and divided into chapters, according to a proper order and method. Also enlarged by so much new material, that you can almost call it a new work.” The story of Calvin’s labor on his *Institutio* is a rich and complex one, and confirms that students of Calvin are warranted to consider it the most important of Calvin’s voluminous writings.

I mention the history of the writing of the *Institutes* and the importance of this work to the Reformation and Calvin’s theology, in order to set a context for my review of Elsie McKee’s translation of the 1541 French edition. Students of Calvin’s theology and *Institutes* are in McKee’s debt for providing the first English translation of this important edition. Though McKee’s translation may not be of special interest to the general reader and student of Calvin’s theology, it is of great value to the academic study of Calvin’s *Institutes*, an appreciation of the pastoral character of Calvin’s theology, and an understanding of Calvin’s contributions to the history and development of the French language.

Elsie McKee, who is the Archibald Alexander Professor of Reformation Studies and the History of Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary, is a well-known and gifted scholar of the Reformation and of Calvin, and demonstrates through her translation that she is eminently suited to the task. McKee notes in her introduction that her translation is based upon the recently-published critical edition of the French text prepared by Olivier Millet. She also observes that the 1541 French edition represents a kind of “second stage” in the production of Calvin’s *Institutes*, one that significantly expanded his discussion of the doctrine of justification, for example, and one that exhibits a more pastoral quality than the academic cast of the first edition of 1536. According to McKee, the pastorality of the French edition reflects the enriching experience of Calvin’s ministry in Strasbourg and is evident even in his choice to make his theological work available in the vernacular. Though the 1541 French edition is often viewed as little more than a translation of the 1539 Latin edition, McKee observes that it was also “a text of pastoral theology in the lan-

guage of the common people and consciously directed to them.” In addition to its theological and pastoral significance, McKee also illustrates a number of features of Calvin’s use of the French language, which are of special importance to the development of the French language for theological discourse and in general.

Several features of McKee’s translation are especially noteworthy. Most importantly, McKee’s translation captures well the freshness and vividness of Calvin’s original French edition. She also provides a fine introductory statement of the importance of the 1541 French edition, its distinctiveness among the various editions of the *Institutes*, and the principles and features that characterize her approach to the translation itself. The translation aims to be as literal as possible, but without losing the elegance and smoothness of Calvin’s French. It also includes Calvin’s original marginal notes and a number of additional notes and helps to the reader of modern English (e.g. by introducing modern conventions of punctuation at times, dividing the text into shorter paragraphs, using quotation marks, etc.).

While not a translation for a casual reader or student of Calvin, McKee’s translation is an extraordinary gift to careful students of the development of Calvin’s theology and *Institutes*. The importance of this edition in the history of Calvin’s *Institutes*, including the way it particularly exhibits the pastoral quality of Calvin’s theological writing, is undeniable. By translating this edition and making it readily accessible to readers in the English language, McKee has made an outstanding contribution to Calvin studies.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Phyllis Mack Crew. *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 1544-1569*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978, reprinted 2008. Pp. 221. \$29.99

Anyone interested in the rise of the Reformed Faith in the Netherlands and the background to the Belgic Confession of Faith must read Phyllis Mack Crew’s work on preaching and iconoclasm in the mid-sixteenth century Netherlands. Despite the high price tag for such a short book, Crew’s work is essential reading.

For purposes of illustrating this, let me offer several representative examples of how Crew’s research illumines the Belgic Confession, forging the usual pattern of a book review in which each chapter is summarized.

First, what is behind the strong language of Belgic Confession, article 28, and the necessity of believers joining the church? Here our Confession speaks of the sixteenth century phenomenon of the “Nicodemites.” Named after Nicodemus, who came to Jesus “by night” for fear of being put out of the synagogue (John 3:2; cf. 12:42), the Nicodemites were those who claimed to be followers of the Reformers and the gospel they rediscovered, but who refused to leave the Roman Catholic Church for

fear of the magistrates and edicts of princes and because they might suffer death or any other corporal punishment. Crew presents one such edict that illumines this article. After the execution of the Reformed minister Christophe de Smet in 1564, all those living in the Netherlands were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. Because the majority of the Reformed Christians took this oath, Guido de Brès lamented, “For what is it to avow by oath the infernal doctrine of the Roman church ... if not to separate from your son Jesus and leave the heavenly doctrine? Alas, it is now our lot to suffer the knowledge that in this time of shadows we have blasphemed too much, and not only served you in vain, but have wickedly disavowed you” (70).

Second, what does the Belgic Confession mean when it speaks of “all sects” (*omnes sectae*) in article 29? Crew shows that there was a plethora of Protestant “sects” within the Netherlands in the mid-sixteenth century. She gives the example of Gaspar vander Heyden, who wrote to the leaders of the church in Emden for advice on dealing with the many Protestant sects in Antwerp, including heretical groups, itinerant preachers, the Anabaptists, as well as the Lutherans (56–58, 95, 119). In this letter he spoke about catechizing his new congregation in the law and the gospel, the commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the sacraments. The studious pastor can track down “Letter of Gaspar vander Heyden to the Emden Consistory, December 17, 1555,” reading it in *Calvinism in Europe 1540-1610: A Collection of Documents*, trans. and eds. Alastair Duke, Gillian Lewis, and Andrew Pettegree (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 133. Crew gives other examples of the spread of “sects” in the Netherlands, such as the case between Adrien van Haemstede, a preacher without a church affiliation, and the Antwerp consistory. The Emden consistory’s advice again was sought. Their advice was that preaching without a church affiliation belonged only as a right of the apostles (71). There were many others, such as a man called Kackhoes, who preached for five years without any contact with the Reformed churches; Loys Brochart, who, after the death of his wife, rented a room and held conventicles; and Wilhelm Heckelers, another lay preacher who met in taverns with small groups to discuss the Bible (60, 62–63, 71). These lay preachers, who had not been called, ordained, or installed in any particular church, plagued the Netherlands and form a background for our Confession’s language in article 29.

Third, Crew’s work gives particularly enlightening background for understanding the Belgic Confession’s words concerning the calling to the ministry and ordination in article 31. As stated above, there were many lay preachers and sects in the time our Confession was written. Because the many non-ordained preachers were such an issue, the Antwerp consistory sent a delegation to Emden to discuss the necessity of ordination (2 n3). This issue eventually led the Provincial Synod of Teurs (April 26, 1563) to determine that if a congregation had no minister, an elder or deacon was permitted to read the approved liturgical prayers but not to preach or to administer the sacraments (59 n28). One item of criticism stands out in this section, though. Crew overstates her case when she says that during the period of 1544–1565 the one defining character-

istic of Reformed ministers in the Netherlands was a lack of understanding of the status and function of the minister (82). The issue of preachers, lay preachers, organized congregations, and unaffiliated sects was not a *theological* problem, but a *practical* problem. Despite the practical problems of the mid-sixteenth century with regard to the office of the ministry, which were mostly due to the intense persecution of Calvinists by the Catholic authorities, the Belgic Confession expressed clearly the theological principles of the Reformed churches that already existed, whether with ministers in the north who were trained in Emden or with those in the south who trained in Geneva or Lausanne.

Fourth, the role of the civil authorities and Christians in relation to them, as expressed in Belgic Confession, article 36, are illumined in Crew's book. Article 36 speaks of submission to the authorities, saying, "Moreover, it is the bounded duty of *every one*, of whatever state, quality, or condition he may be...." In contrast to the beliefs of some Anabaptists and later, even some Calvinists, Christians are not exempt from submitting to government. In 1566, Guido de Brès was called to minister in Antwerp but soon thereafter was called south to the town of Valenciennes, near the northern French border. During the brief period of April 1566–April 1567, known as the "wonder year" (*annus mirabilis*), support for the Reformation continued to grow, and the people grew bold, meeting in the fields in great crowds as large as twenty-five thousand to hear de Brès and other Reformed pastors preach. The governor of Lille, Douai, and Orchies, Maximilien Vilain de Gand, wrote to Margaret of Parma on June 30, 1566, describing several "preachings" that had occurred the previous night, one of which was attended by over four thousand to hear Cornille de la Zenne outside the city of Lille. Another account describes open-air preaching to thousands in Ghent on July 7, 1566. De Brès himself describes this growing movement, saying it was "after a long famine of those words of the Gospel of the Lord." The people came armed with their pitchforks in fear of the Roman Catholic authorities, while nobles were mounted on horses with their weapons (8). There, only a few years after the Confession was written, this growth of the Reformed movement led to a wave of iconoclasm throughout the southern Netherlands. During this time it was de Brès himself who opposed these actions, even rebuking his own people for open revolt, which was contrary to their Confession. In fact, when Valenciennes was under siege, de Brès advocated immediate surrender, while his colleague de la Grange advocated dictating the terms of surrender to the army (48 n29).

Fifth, and finally, is the most eye-opening chapter of the book, "The Consciousness of the Reformed Clergy" (ch. 5). In this chapter Dr. Crew illustrates how the Reformed ministers of the Netherlands in the mid-sixteenth century saw their sufferings as evidence that they were aligned with the Old Testament prophets of old. This was a typical way the Reformed movement identified itself in the sixteenth century, as the ancient people of God. Persecution was not only a mark of their being the true church, but it also gave them an identity and purpose in the midst of harsh trials.

In the face of such persecutions, de Brès did not give up his new-

found faith. Instead, he left his hometown in 1548 and went to London, where he lived until 1552 under the gracious reign of the Reformed king, Edward VI. Crew described de Brès' experience of exile as the one thing that united the evangelical clergy in the Netherlands during the mid-sixteenth century: "In fact, the only experience which the ministers seem to have had in common was that of flight" (41).

Later, in 1559, de Brès married Catherine Ramon and returned to the Netherlands to the town of Tournai where he ministered for three years. This too was a period of underground work, due to the continual threat of persecution. During these years, de Brès brought the gospel to the members of his congregation, though not in the conventional way of preaching to a gathered congregation in a public building. The hatred of the authorities prevented the congregation from meeting together for public worship. Instead, under the cover of dinner parties, de Brès went from home to home under the pseudonym, "Jerome," where people met in small groups of six to twelve people, called conventicles. Crew gives a typical "agenda" for such a conventicle meeting: sermon, dinner, lecture on another biblical text, and communion (62).

In concluding, although this book may entail a steep price tag relative to its length, it is worth every penny in primary research and historical awareness of the events surrounding the writing and adoption of the Belgic Confession of Faith in the Netherlands in the mid-sixteenth century. This book is must reading because it gives an honest assessment of the role of religion, sociology, and economics during this period by stripping away the hagiography that surrounds our ideas of the Netherlands in this period. Far from being heroes of the faith *a la* David v. Goliath, the Reformed ministers and lay preachers were ordinary men with ordinary struggles. Crew also marshals a litany of primary sources from men such as Guy de Brès, Franciscus Junius, as well as Roman Catholic opponents of the Reformed movement. Reading these men in their own words describe their work opens to us a whole new world in relation to confessional studies.

—Daniel R. Hyde

Mark Driscoll & Gerry Breshears. *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008. Pp. 272. \$19.99 (cloth)

This book is an honest—brutally honest—glimpse into the hard, heartbreaking, and healing work of the pastorate. The work is pastorally healing because herein the gospel is ministered; or more specifically, the cross of Christ is administered to broken lives—broken in rebellion, broken in loneliness, broken in temptation, broken in betrayal, broken in abuse, broken in addiction, broken in disease, broken in hatred.

These pastoral letters to hurting souls remind every pastor of the high and holy calling that is theirs as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. Pastors must represent Christ and minister him to sinners of every stripe: the lost, the lonely, the disloyal, the deceived, the victimizer, the victim. Following the introduction, twelve chapters are presented, each setting

forth a specific scene or situation needing pastoral attention, followed by a letter of pastoral care. Depending on the situation, the letter can be principally an exercise in encouragement, assurance, or instruction. Alternatively, the letter can be chiefly focused on admonishment, correction, and rebuke—or some of each. The bottom line, however, is that each letter administers Christ and his cross to the situation. In addition, each chapter concludes with a brief theological section that expounds aspects of Christ's work of redemption. Thus this book offers, in short form, expositions of *Christus Victor*, redemption, sacrifice, gift righteousness, justification, propitiation, expiation, unlimited (i.e., efficacious) limited atonement, ransom, *Christus Exemplar*, reconciliation, and Christ as revelation.

The topics covered here are as diverse as impending death, sexual addiction, rape, child molestation, familial estrangement, unbelief, and self-righteousness. In taking up these topics, besides others, pastors will be encouraged in their own responsibilities and labors—or admonished to be more faithful. They will also be instructed to be bolder and more thoughtful in applying the work of Christ in their pastoral counsel. Lastly, pastors will be enlivened to see how theology and the practical work of ministry coalesce. Indeed, this book is potently practical, for it takes us into the rough-and-tumble of the church in the world and the world in the church. Any pastor who works with hurting souls and really cares about soul-care needs this book. *Death by Love* summons us to the cross and to our own sort of dying by love.

—J. Mark Beach

W. Robert Godfrey, *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009. Pp. 207. \$15.99

Biographies of Calvin are written in a variety of styles and from many different perspectives. Some are primarily historical studies that aim to place Calvin in the context of the sixteenth-century Reformation. Often such historical biographies downplay Calvin's theological contributions, and eschew the temptation to view Calvin as a friend or a foe. Sometimes such biographies are written with an "axe to grind," attempting either to answer Calvin's critics or join the chorus of Calvin denigrators. From the time of the Reformation until the present, there have been an ample number of the latter, which continue to advance what Basil Hall nicely termed the "Calvin legend." In the popular caricature of the Reformer, Calvin represents the epitome of intolerance and is only known as the author of the "horrible decree" of predestination, which makes God out to be a tyrant and human beings mere puppets in the hand of their Creator.

W. Robert Godfrey's biography carves out its own niche among the many biographies of Calvin, old and new alike. Godfrey, who is the president of Westminster Seminary in California and life-time teacher of church history, especially Reformation history, writes his biography as a sympathetic student of Calvin. He also writes as someone who believes Calvin's most important contributions to the church lie in the area of his

reforms of the church's worship and ministry and his masterful summary of the basics of Reformed (that is, biblical and catholic) theology. Readers of Godfrey's biography will find that he provides an excellent sketch of the broad outlines of Calvin's life, and an especially keen summary of the principal themes of Calvin's theological writings.

Godfrey divides his biography into two general parts, the first treating Calvin as a "Pilgrim" and the second Calvin as a "Pastor." In the first part on Calvin's pilgrimage, Godfrey details Calvin's early life and formal education, as well as his first ministry in Geneva (1536-1538) and his exile and ministry in Strasbourg (1538-1541). In the second part of his biography, Godfrey presents Calvin as a pastor and church reformer in Geneva until his death in 1564. Whereas the first part of his biography is more historical in nature, the second part offers a broad summary of Calvin's views on a variety of ecclesiastical and theological topics (e.g., worship, sacraments, predestination, the *Institutes*).

Throughout his biography, Godfrey exhibits a thorough familiarity with Calvin's theology and reformatory labor. Rather than interacting with a variety of scholarly sources, Godfrey quotes copiously from original sources, such as Calvin's *Institutes*, commentaries, sermons, and correspondence. In this way, the reader is able to hear Calvin's voice rather than that of his interpreter. Godfrey writes in clear prose, and offers an excellent exposition of the principal themes of Calvin's theology. His treatment, for example, of Calvin's doctrine of predestination represents one of the best, short summaries of Calvin's teaching that I have read. Godfrey spends a considerable amount of time on Calvin's reforms of the church's worship in Geneva. Though his account is generally accurate, he tends to interpret Calvin in a way that overemphasizes his continuity with the views of later Puritanism and a more developed conception of what was later termed the "regulative principle" of worship. In my judgment, Calvin's understanding of worship reflects a greater measure of flexibility in application than the more-developed "regulative principle" of Puritanism would permit. Though Godfrey covers most of the important emphases in Calvin's theology, he does not consider in any detail Calvin's important contributions to the question of the relation between church and state, or what is sometimes termed Calvin's "public theology" (e.g. his social ethics).

Though Godfrey's study does not aim to provide a technical treatment of Calvin's life and theology, it will serve well as a popular introduction to Calvin's life and theology. Indeed, this study is among the best popular introductions presently available, and is among the few books on Calvin that the general reader would do well to consult.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro. *Naturalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Pp. 140. \$16.00

This is the best brief, yet comprehensive, treatment of naturalism to appear. Why should anyone care? Only because naturalism—the conviction that nature is all that there is and thus the supernatural is spurious—dominates the scientific community and thus much of the academy. Naturalism is the avowed enemy of theism and merits a closer examination so that all might see its internal inconsistency and incoherency, the identification of which serves as one of the prongs of a presuppositional apologetic approach to a secularized science.

This book may be expected to enjoy a wide readership. For the minister, it will serve to expose the irrationality of naturalism in its attack on the supernaturalism that is foundational to our faith. For the educated layperson, particularly the scientist, it sets forth the contours of scientism (an unvarying accompaniment to naturalism) and serves to encourage the believing scientist to remember that what is foundational to science is not of the nature of science but rather is religious. For the atheistic scientist, it may even serve to help him or her see that naturalism cannot support itself and as a closed system does not possess the explanatory power that it professes.

Given that God made man in his image and that, even as fallen, man retains the *semen religionis*, where does the notion of naturalism come from? How can man, who has the *sensus deitatis*, deny the supernatural? Certainly we may say that unregenerate man suppresses the truth in unrighteousness as he lives out the antithesis. Yet would not common grace prompt him not to deny the supernatural? Many non-Christians, most in fact, do not deny the supernatural but posit a false supernatural: hence all the non-Christian world religions and belief systems. Many unbelieving scientists, however, suppress the truth even further and pretend as if nature is all there is, acting as if science possesses ultimate explanatory powers. Secular scientists often pretend that science goes all the way down and that the scientific methodology is a given, enjoying revisionary immunity.

To see how so many scientists have come to be naturalists, one may think back to the Homeric era, a time of Greek superstition: it was out of this that Thales, the sixth-century “father of philosophy,” developed natural philosophy. The natural philosophers that followed in Thales’ train, disgusted with the absurdity and immorality of Greek religion, turned from the supernatural to the natural and thus developed ancient science. To seek to discover secondary causes in the world for why it rains is preferable to having recourse to a mythological explanation like “the gods are crying.” This was, largely, a positive development insofar as it moved mankind closer to the truth of what really happens in the world over which the true God, not those of the Greek pantheon, reigns.

Natural philosophy developed apace from the time of Thales and the other Milesians to the classical period of Plato and Aristotle, and ultimately to the world of the Copernican, Newtonian, and Einsteinian revolutions. Whatever differences Aristotle and Bacon, for example, had, rep-

representing the ancient and early modern scientific methodologies, respectively, they both sought answers to natural phenomena in secondary causes. True supernaturalism, as we have in the Christian faith, does not object to science, that enterprise dedicated to dealing with secondary causes. Properly practiced, science seeks to do nothing other than understand the world that God has created. Science concerns itself not with the primary cause (God) but with the secondary causes, seeking to understand nature from within nature. Properly, such science does not deny that there is a primary cause that underlies, and makes possible, all secondary causes.

The turn from the false supernatural to the natural that began in the pre-Socratics, positive as it was in some ways, always augured potential hazards, however. To be sure, to be done with false supernaturalism was liberating, especially as it freed man to seek to understand the world in terms of general revelation, which never lies, though unregenerate man distorts it. To believe, however, that the natural was all there was became its own bondage, rendering this a world not governed by a beneficent God, but by cruel, impersonal fate. The seeds of such naturalism, sown in the ancient world, were mitigated by Christendom but germinated in the Renaissance and bloomed in the Enlightenment, as the "civilized" world came to reject supernatural Christianity and embrace rationalism, empiricism, and naturalism. Naturalism has been around as an alternative to theism for millennia but did not in earlier times dominate science as it has come to do in the modern world. Post-modernism in some respects seeks to push back naturalism, rejecting the notion that nature is all there is, arguing for some sort of new age spirituality. But naturalism continues to dominate the sciences.

Many would undoubtedly ask, what's wrong with naturalism dominating the sciences? Here's the problem: naturalism cannot account for reality as we know it and is a self-refuting proposition. To reduce everything to the natural is to reduce it to the material and to the processes that are said to govern matter. On such a construction, for instance, the human person becomes only matter in motion. Given this approach, the soul, or consciousness, or the mind (as opposed to the physical organ, the brain) cannot be said to exist. There is a kind of naturalism (such as that held by Dennett, Dawkins, et al.)—Goetz and Taliaferro call it "strict naturalism"—that denies the existence of anything that is not material. This absolutizing of the material reduces mankind to impersonal chance evolution, robbing him of any sort of free will. The "broad naturalism" (of a John Searle, e.g.) does not deny that man has some sort of inner reality that we might call a soul. These broad naturalists believe that though we cannot now grasp the true nature of the mind, one day, in the future, we will discover how things like minds and souls fit within a naturalistic framework.

Chapters one and two develop the contours of strict naturalism, chapter three considers the strength of the naturalistic critique of dualism (the reality that we are body and soul), and chapter four takes stock of broad naturalism. In the last chapter (five), Goetz and Taliaferro remind us that, however much partisans of strict and broad naturalism

may feud with each other, they both reject theism. Thus both varieties of naturalism need vigorously to be attacked. Naturalism, in any of its forms, is completely counter-intuitive, unable to account for what most people take to be most real and precious about life—like love and its accompanying feelings. If love can be reduced to mere epiphenomena, even most unbelievers would not regard life as worth living. Strict naturalism denies the soul altogether while broad naturalism posits that one day all will be able to be understood in a completely naturalistic way. This means that naturalism cannot account for the kind of complexity that we experience in our lives but must reduce it all to firing neurons.

Of course, if naturalism is true it deconstructs itself. Goetz and Taliaferro note this but generously do not linger over it: “One argument against strict naturalism would be to maintain that the view is self-defeating: its proponents *believe* that it is true and seek to convince us of its truth, whereas if the view is true, then there ultimately is no such thing as *believing that it is true* because *there ultimately are no psychological events of any kind, period*” (26, emphasis original). One might well ask, why would anyone think something so untenable as this is true? Because if there is no God (a common starting point for all naturalists) then there is no immaterial being who enjoys aseity and who can serve as the source for all that is. It always come down to the theism question. Quite simply, naturalists believe as they do because, being antitheists, they have no alternatives. But time and again, in their antitheism, they presuppose theism (and must do so even to be able to articulate their naturalism). The authors rightly end this fine work by exposing the real agenda of all naturalism: the denial of any supernaturalism and hence theism.

The value of this book lies in its internal critique of naturalism. The book does fall short of what one would want in a full-orbed analysis of naturalism: an insistence that Christian theism alone is the necessary precondition of the intelligibility of all thought. Goetz and Taliaferro appear to make common cause with Plantinga and others, particularly in their affirmation of Plantinga’s libertarian free will approach to theodicy in his defense of the warranted nature of Christian belief (a position well-answered by Scott Oliphint in his *Reasons for Faith*). Still, this is an excellent refutation of the all-too-common naturalism that dominates our day.

—Alan D. Strange

Bruce Gordon, *Calvin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Pp. xiii + 398, including select bibliography and index. \$35.00 (cloth)

Among recently published biographies of John Calvin, Bruce Gordon’s *Calvin* is undoubtedly the most comprehensive and detailed in its telling of the story of Calvin’s life as a sixteenth-century reformer and churchman. Bruce Gordon, who is professor of Reformation history at Yale Divinity School, provides the reader a richly textured account not only of John Calvin but also of the social and intellectual world into

which he was born and in the context of which he pursued his reformatory labors.

In eighteen chapters, Gordon traces Calvin's life from his youth in France to the end of his life as the principal reforming pastor and theologian of Geneva, Switzerland. In a lively and impressionistic manner, he offers a richly contextualized account of Calvin's remarkable life and accomplishments. Unlike accounts that either magnify Calvin's virtues or contribute ammunition to Calvin detractors, Gordon seeks to ascertain what was peculiar to Calvin's life and work in the course of events that swirled around him in the tumultuous middle part of the sixteenth-century. In Gordon's account of Calvin's life, we meet a more complex Calvin than in many other biographies. Gordon's Calvin is at once both a saint and a sinner: a person of enormous energy and passion, who was above all else an intellectually-gifted interpreter of Scripture in the context of the catholic Christian tradition, and a person who could be haughty and condescending toward those whom he regarded as half-hearted in their zeal for the church's reformation or limited in their intellectual gifts and talents. Some readers who are looking for a consistently flattering portrait of Calvin will undoubtedly find some of Gordon's interpretive comments objectionable. Others, who are anxious to add another biography to the list of those that are hostile toward Calvin's life and theology, will likely find Gordon's account too congenial for their purpose.

Since any new biography of Calvin faces the challenge of self-justification (why another biography, when so many fine biographies have already been written?), some of the features of Gordon's biography deserve special notice. Unlike some biographers of Calvin, Gordon painstakingly describes the sixteenth-century world in which Calvin lived and worked. More than most biographers, Gordon has a rich grasp of Calvin's world, and traces Calvin's life against the backdrop of developments in the ecclesiastical, political, economic, and intellectual dimensions of that world. Details of the events surrounding Calvin's labor as a reformer are provided in his biography that I have not found in other biographies. For example, without over-interpreting the period of Calvin's academic training, Gordon offers a fascinating account of the intellectual and religious currents in France during the period of Calvin's formal education that helps to illumine the setting for Calvin's conversion in the 1530's. He also provides details regarding Calvin's visit to Zurich after being banished from Geneva in 1538 and prior to his settling in Strasbourg that are seldom treated by those who tell the story of Calvin's life. Throughout his biography, Gordon proves especially adept at locating Calvin's writing and reforming efforts within the circumstances of his sixteenth century context. To aid readers in appreciating this context, Gordon's book includes maps of Europe in Calvin's day, a sketch of the layout of the city of Geneva in the sixteenth century, an insert of twelve illustrations, a select bibliography on sources related to each of the chapters of his volume, and an extensive index.

Though the strength of Gordon's biography lies in its richly embroidered account of the sixteenth-century milieu for Calvin's life and work, his biography is not without weaknesses. Gordon's account of Calvin's

life does not exhibit the kind of sympathy for Calvin, especially for Calvin's theological contributions and reformatory efforts, that is evident in other fine biographers like E. Doumerge or T.H.L. Parker. Gordon writes rather dispassionately, and even rather limitedly, about many of Calvin's theological themes and emphases. For example, even in his summary of Calvin's greatness, Gordon accents more Calvin's "exquisite prose" in defense of his interpretation of the Bible than the interpretation itself. But at the same time he focuses considerable attention upon his impressions of Calvin's character, particularly his traits of alleged intellectual superiority and even arrogance. For example, it is a little jarring to read in the Preface that Calvin, in addition to being "brilliant" and "visionary," was "ruthless" and an "outstanding hater." It also seems a little overstated to remark that Calvin "never felt he had encountered an intellectual equal." No doubt, Gordon is anxious to avoid the error of those whose biographies of Calvin paint too bright and even a portrait of him as a peerless theologian and unblemished saint. But these kinds of characterizations on Gordon's part seem more rhetorically sensationalistic than reliable descriptions of what we know from the evidence regarding Calvin's person.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, Gordon's biography takes its place as among the best and most thorough accounts of Calvin's life. No English biography of Calvin does more than Gordon's with Calvin's times and context.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Michael Horton. *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008. Pp. 270. \$19.99 (cloth)

Those who are under the conviction that representations of Jesus violate the second commandment might appreciate the cover of Michael Horton's recent book upon which da Vinci's familiar painting of the Last Supper is reproduced, but with the central figure of Jesus cut out. However, the intention of the cover art is not to make an iconoclastic statement against images of Christ but to imply that the central figure of Christianity has been cut out of the teaching and preaching in many North American churches, resulting in what Horton calls *Christless Christianity*.

Ironically, da Vinci's painting has garnered a great deal of public interest in the last several years due to Dan Brown's bestselling book *The da Vinci Code*, however that interest has not focused on the central figure either, but rather on the identity of the figure seated to Jesus' right. But while the greater public may be easily distracted from the centrality of Christ and the essence of the gospel by conspiracy theories and early Gnostic writings, surely the church is not susceptible to such distractions. Surely Jesus Christ and the gospel remain front in center in the church, right?

Not according to Horton. He candidly expresses that his concern is not that God is treated so lightly in American culture but that he is not taken seriously in our own faith and practice (23). Indeed, Horton claims that the church itself in North America has been distracted from the centrality of Christ to such a degree that what's left is Christless, pointing out that it is "just as easy to lose Christ by distraction as it is by denial" (143). But what is even more unsettling is Horton's observation that the person and work of Jesus Christ and the essence of the gospel have been willingly removed, or at least neglected and marginalized, due to distraction not so much among secular humanists or among theological liberals, but among conservative evangelicals (54). He remarks that the ball is expected to be "fumbled by the liberals, when conservative churches are often as likely to be interested in someone or something other than *Christ crucified* this week" (143-144).

Like good preaching, Horton is not calling people "out there somewhere" to account for being distracted, getting off course, and failing to proclaim the gospel of God's grace in Christ faithfully. He frequently reminds the reader of the part evangelicals as a whole have played in hastening the development of Christless Christianity. For instance, Horton observes that "no one group in modern history has wanted the general public to pray nonsectarian prayers – that is, with or without Jesus Christ – as much as the conservative evangelicals. When it comes to *getting God back into our schools*, we can even leave Jesus behind" (25). But Horton's accusations and challenge is intended to be sweeping, as he humbly admits that he is "writing about 'us'—all of us who profess the name of Christ both as ministers and witnesses" (27). He later states, "None of us is immune to this indictment that we are losing our focus upon, confidence in, and increasingly even our knowledge of the greatest story ever told" (106-107).

Horton judges the present ecclesiastical situation in North America to be one of captivity in which the centrality of the person and work of Christ is disappearing from churches and being replaced by what he calls, borrowing a phrase from sociologist Christian Smith, moralistic, therapeutic deism. Horton assumes a steady diet of this moralistic, therapeutic deism across the ecclesiastical landscape today, the message of which can be summarized, "do more, try harder" (17). If one wishes to test his assumption, simply listen to the content of many of today's sermons on Old Testament texts even from conservative evangelical pulpits. What one often hears are exhortations to be like David or be like Abraham. Sadly, what one often does not hear is the gospel. Many can relate to Horton when he notes that he never knew growing up in evangelicalism that the Old Testament was about Christ (148). It is tragic but true that in many conservative evangelical churches, the Old Testament is treated as Christless and is regarded as a book of stories filled with moral examples having more in common with Aesop's fables than with the record of redemptive acts in history pointing toward, culminating in, and fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The practice of preaching from the Old Testament is, of course, related to the historic debates regarding exemplaristic and redemptive-historical preaching, but one can hardly dispute that

drawing a “straight line of application from the narrative to us” (151), which is often the case today, represents a failure to preach the gospel and is symptomatic of Christless Christianity.

While this moralistic, therapeutic deism can be frequently observed in the way the Old Testament is taught and preached, according to Horton it is perhaps best illustrated by the popular ministry and teaching of Joel Osteen. Horton offers a superb 35-page evaluation and critique of Osteen’s teaching in a chapter entitled “Smooth Talking and Christless Christianity.” Horton concludes that Osteen’s message lacks condemnation and, subsequently, justification. In Osteen’s version of moralistic, therapeutic deism, the categories have changed: sin is “failing to live up to our potential, not falling short of God’s glory” (71), while salvation is “not a matter of divine rescue from the judgment that is coming on the world but rather a matter of self-improvement in order to have your best life now” (74).

Furthermore, Horton discerns that in Osteen’s *Become a Better You*, the seven keys identified by him have little, if anything, to do with the gospel, but consist of commands that could be “generated from a host of sources without any appeal to the Bible” (81). Horton offers the stinging conclusion that, “You don’t need Christ for the things that Osteen and many other preachers today promise. You do not need the Bible, just Tony Robbins” (94). If Osteen’s approach is representative of the American church, and judging by the popularity of his broadcasts and books it is, then the preponderance of Christless Christianity is no surprise.

Horton capably explores the historic roots and theological soil from which Christless Christianity has grown. Specifically, Horton names Pelagianism as a major culprit, describing it as “our most natural theology” (44). Horton then demonstrates the continuing influence of Pelagianism in North America by way of the Second Great Awakening, which promulgated a do-it-yourself salvation through the teachings of Charles Finney concentrating on the performance of certain steps and techniques. Horton also notes the continuing influence of ancient Gnosticism in American spirituality. So in the end, Pelagianism keeps us looking *to* ourselves and Gnosticism keeps us looking *within* ourselves – neither has us looking to Christ.

Confronting the reader with the reality of Christless Christianity is the burden of Horton’s work. But perhaps what he pleads for more than anything else is an appropriate emphasis on and faithful proclamation of the indicatives of the gospel. In Horton’s assessment, today’s Christianity is Christless because it has ignored the *indicatives* of the gospel in favor of the *imperatives* of the law; the Good News has been turned into good advice. In Horton’s words “there is a determination to assimilate the gospel to law, an announcement of victory to a call to be victorious, indicatives to imperatives, Good News to good advice. The bad news may not be as bad as it used to be, but the Good news is just a softer version of the bad news: Do more. But this time, it’s easy! And if you fail, don’t worry. God just wants you to do your best. He’ll take care of the rest. So who needs Christ?” (70). Indeed, the message of “do more, try harder” hardly necessitates Jesus and his finished work.

In the final analysis, Horton is fundamentally making an appeal to conservative evangelicals at the beginning of the 21st century that J. Gresham Machen was making to liberals almost 100 years ago near the beginning of the 20th century: for the imperatives to be rooted in the indicatives of the gospel. Horton rightly maintains that if this is not the case, one is ultimately left with a Christless Christianity.

Horton asserts that the “worst thing that can happen to the church is to confuse law and gospel” (122). So Horton spends a significant amount of time distinguishing the two. He puts it succinctly when he says, “Any form of *doing* the gospel is a confusion of categories. The *law* tells us what to do; the *gospel* tells us what God has done for us in Christ” (124). He offers a pointed and much needed criticism of common expressions to “be the gospel” as if “the Good News were a message about us and our works instead of about Christ and his works” (124), concluding that we are “not the gospel; Jesus Christ alone is the gospel” (117).

Horton is rightly concerned that the gospel is often taken for granted—left in the background in the midst of a steady stream of law in the form of exhortations and advice to “try harder” flowing from the pulpit, as if the gospel was simply a “given.” But as Horton posits, it is actually the law that is hard-wired into us as the given; the gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ is what is and must always be arresting us. Horton also refutes the widespread notion that what Christians need are more calls to serious discipleship, or that Christians already have the gospel down and “now just need to get on with living it out” (120). He insightfully suggests that when people ask for more practical or relevant preaching and when preachers concentrate on contemporary application over interpretation of the text, what is being sought is law, not gospel (145-146). What one is frequently left with is, in fact, moralistic, therapeutic deism.

Additionally, Horton offers a much needed corrective against the idea that the beginning of the Christian life is marked by grace while the rest “is about our experience, feelings, commitment, and obedience” (120). What churches and church members must come to grips with is that it is not only the unbeliever sitting in the pew who needs to hear the gospel, but Christians who need to hear the gospel week after week. Horton correctly maintains that unless Christ and the gospel are preached week after week “we will, like the Galatians, drift toward the view that we begin with Christ and his Spirit and then end up striving for our own righteousness before God” (146).

A consistent dose of law without the gospel, of making it about what we must do rather than about what God has done, of announcing the importance of loving God and neighbor rather than announcing God’s love in Christ, has consequences. According to Horton, exhortations to try harder, by themselves, “will only deepen either my self-righteousness or my spiritual depression” (130). It is not that there is no room for imperatives—the Scriptures are full of commands. As is the case in Paul’s writings, it is that these imperatives must be *explicitly* and *consistently* placed within the context of the gospel indicative. Unless, of course, one is content with Christless Christianity.

It is refreshing and instructive to read Horton's pointed correctives to today's moralistic, therapeutic deism and his concise statements of the gospel. For example, while it is sad to read Horton's assessment that for Osteen "the good news is that on judgment day God will look at our heart," it is actually quite invigorating to read Horton state in response that the good news is that "for all who are in Christ, God looks on the heart, life, death, and resurrection of his Son and declares us righteous in him" (80) and that the "real power and wisdom is not found in principles for victorious living but in the announcement of God's victory in Christ" (103). The fact that the announcement of the gospel is invigorating and provides the only proper incentive for the imperative is precisely Horton's point (132).

Overall, the book is rich, refreshing, and challenging, full of thought-provoking and probing questions designed to alert the church to its captivity and draw it back to the gospel. It is engagingly written with colorful illustrations both from Horton's personal life as well as from contemporary culture. Most importantly, it is theologically astute in offering its criticism of the present American church.

Unfortunately, the book seems to lack an orderly, structured progression and Horton, at times, falls into repeating themes, points, and even, on occasion, illustrations. Along these lines, the last 100 pages of the book seem to address *churchless* Christianity more than *Christless* Christianity. Though the content is highly valuable as he emphasizes the historic Reformed means of grace over against a Gnostic-influenced individualism, the book loses continuity.

In addition, one might argue that the importance of the imperative is muffled by Horton's emphasis on the gospel indicative. It is true that the imperative must necessarily *follow* the gospel indicative, but it is also true that the imperative must *necessarily* follow the gospel indicative. And while we are not called to "be the gospel," our profession of the gospel is to be *adorned* with our good works (Westminster Confession of Faith, XVI. 2). But to be fair, although the book emphasizes the first use of the law over the third use, Horton does conclude that the loving course of action for the church in the world "is to *perform* in front of it, to preach *and practice* what it means to be sinners who are justified" (247, emphasis added). Even more importantly, Horton is not attempting to speak into a climate in which the imperative is being neglected, but rather in which the imperative is confused with or announced *in place of* the gospel indicatives which are increasingly being drowned out.

For this reason, Horton's volume deserves to be widely read across denominational lines. At a time when the pulse of the church seems to be growing weak and breathing grows shallow, Horton sounds a serious and weighty alarm sorely needed to call the church to run with endurance the race that is set before us *by looking to Jesus*, and to him alone, as the center and substance of the gospel, our faith, and our life.

—Brian Allred

Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008. Pp. 496, including bibliography and index. \$39.99 (cloth)

It is a truism that during the last thirty years, Christian spirituality has become a growth industry, surely for publishers, and gradually for scholars. The contemporary resurgence of attention to this discipline occasioned, in 1991, the founding of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, which meets annually in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion. Such formal scholarly recognition of a sub-discipline within religious studies often serves to identify a phenomenon that is here to stay.

In 1995, Evan Howard founded his Colorado-based Spirituality Shoppe, which he describes as an evangelical center for the study of Christian spirituality. He also lectures in philosophy and religion at Mesa State College in Grand Junction, Colorado.

The book under review is a textbook designed to provide students with a topical survey in the field of Christian spirituality. Other introductions tend to focus on the history of Christian spirituality, and have tended to disconnect spirituality from dogmatics in the interests of creating an authentically ecumenical and interdisciplinary field of study. By contrast, this volume seeks to gather the common elements from the spiritualities of the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions, and as such, it pays more attention to the general and the shared rather than to the particular.

As a textbook, this volume is arranged, edited, and printed with superb care. Each chapter begins with an outline and objectives, and the text is enhanced with sidebars, charts, and other summarizing material, including questions for discussion. A glossary appears at the end of the book. The target student is probably in college or seminary, and clearly the student has been kept in mind on every page.

After mapping the field of inquiry by reviewing important distinctions and definitions, the author proceeds to explore (here comes a list of the book's chapter topics) the dynamics of Christian spirituality, the human spiritual experience, the God of Christian spirituality, the uniquenesses of Christian spirituality, including the components of transformation, formation, prayer, fellowship, and discernment.

Any textbook in a field of resurging interest like Christian spirituality must treat the primary matters of models and methods of inquiry and analysis. Relevant conclusions drawn from theology, social sciences, and human experience need to be identified, evaluated, and integrated. The author treats such foundational questions with a skill that matches his announced scope required for an introductory textbook.

Therein lies, of course, the most significant challenge, namely, whether and to what degree theology (reflection on divine special revelation in Scripture) will be permitted to explain and evaluate conclusions drawn from the social sciences and from human experience. Fundamental to meeting that challenge is the need to define the contribution of the Scripture, the church, and the church's confessions to the approach fol-

lowed in the scholarly discipline known as Christian spirituality. Without discounting the significant achievement registered with the publication of this work, we are left wondering whether foundational courses in biblical studies and doctrinal studies, as well as ecclesiastical studies (church history, symbolics [the history and content of the church's creeds and confessions]), form essential prerequisites for studying Christian spirituality and thus benefiting from this work. If so, then should not a reliable textbook introducing Christian spirituality first supply the student with a biblical-confessional-theological framework within which then to study this discipline? Such a framework would furnish tools for evaluating human religious experience, and for discriminating among spiritualities that are more and less coherent and consistent.

An example of what we have in mind is a work published in 2008 and endorsed by Howard, authored by James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). Wilhoit's starting point is the church as the divinely appointed community commissioned to cultivate spiritual formation. The church is called to foster faith-life, through the personal and public means of grace, by nurturing believers in daily Bible reading, Bible memorization, public congregational worship, communal Sunday observance, pastoral visiting by pastor and elders, regular hospitality, and intergenerational socializing. By contrast, in *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* the reader will discern indifference, if not antipathy, toward the church. Our conclusion arises from two considerations. First, the subject index has no listing for "church" or "preaching" or "baptism" or "eucharist," and the entry for "worship" directs us over to the topic of "prayer." Second, the majority of the cartoons that decorate the text throughout the volume seem irritatingly jejune in their portrayal of the church of Jesus Christ.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, this volume makes a seasoned contribution to the field, one that invites students to participate meaningfully in the continuing conversation about the source, style, and shape of Christian spirituality in our generation.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

J. Nelson Jennings. *God the Real Superpower: Rethinking Our Role in Missions*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007. Pp. 261. \$21.99

There are not many books written on missions from a Reformed point of view. While P&R is certainly not the only publisher of Reformed literature, the fact that this publisher only has four other titles on this subject speaks volumes, especially when two were written several decades ago. We can be grateful that attempts are being made to fill this lacuna.

One might expect that one of these attempts would be this book by J. Nelson Jennings. Jennings is an associate professor of world mission at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church in America, he served as a missionary

for a number of years in Japan. He is the president of Presbyterian Mission International, an organization that engages in worldwide missions through nationals.

In *God the Real Superpower*, Jennings sets out to argue that American Christians need to reconfigure their thinking about Christian missions. He argues that there are too many inherited assumptions regarding missions and it is necessary to critically examine those assumptions. In particular, Jennings is concerned that attitudes and perspectives that Americans have with regards to social, political and military influence have shaped the approach of many to the missionary calling of believers.

The author endeavours to execute his agenda through the template of the first epistle of Peter and particularly what that epistle says about suffering. Peter writes about the suffering of the Saviour and about the suffering of his people. Jennings believes that this message is pertinent for American Christians today. He believes that suffering for American Christians in relation to missions means relinquishing “assumed and subconscious control, rights and privileges with respect to God and to other people” (8). This is a dominant theme of the book and it reappears throughout. Jennings attempts to unfold this through five subsidiary themes drawn from various passages of 1 Peter: (1) God is the mission Superpower (1:21); (2) The church is international (5:9); (3) God has sent the church into various contexts (2:12); (4) Christian missions should be multidirectional (4:10); and (5) Christian missions are ongoing within the world’s various contexts (1:17). At first glance, this appears to be a helpful approach.

There are several things that are commendable about this volume. For instance, Jennings offers some incisive critical analysis of the “Three-Self Formula” of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson (101-103). He outlines how this formula, while developed with good intentions, is difficult to justify in the light of Biblical teaching on ecclesiastical interdependency. Jennings is at his best when illustrating how racism subtly historically created distinctions such as those between missions and evangelism (74). On a related note, he draws attention to those missiologists in the past who exempted North America from “the mission field” (167, cf. 181-182). Finally, he has some excellent practical ideas about the benefits of organizing international pulpit exchanges and short-term mission trips that include “them” coming to “us.”

However, despite those positive features there remain some serious reservations. One of them has to do with the insistence of Jennings that American Christians are called to suffer by relinquishing “control, rights, and privileges.” Seen from the perspective of the suffering endured by God’s people in times past and present, this cannot help but seem rather glib. While Jennings wants to apply the words of Peter to the American situation, his effort could be perceived as cheapening the real suffering endured by believers elsewhere. It would seem that his argument would be better served by simply drawing attention to what the Scriptures say in 1 Peter (and elsewhere) about humility.

Another reservation has to do with the definition of mission and missions. Jennings insists on a distinction between mission and missions.

Mission is the *missio Dei*, God's comprehensive singular mission. Missions are what Christians do – through missions, believers participate in mission. While this is a common distinction throughout contemporary missiology, Jennings assumes it rather than proving it from the Scriptures. Given the suspicion that some Reformed missiologists have cast upon the *missio Dei*, we can reasonably expect such a proof. Also, in his operational definition of missions, the church seems to be eclipsed in favour of individual Christians. It is true that the church is mentioned occasionally throughout, but the *emphasis* is not ecclesiocentric. Would it not be if Jennings developed his definitions from Scripture?

Related to the foregoing, Jennings' understanding of the *missio Dei* is truly comprehensive and that has implications for the missions of Christian believers. He speaks so often of "God's ongoing mission of restoration" that one begins to wonder whether there may not be an over-realized eschatology functioning in the background. This "mission of restoration" is broader than the saving of human beings from God's wrath and extends to include social and political issues, and even ecology. Believers are to participate in this *missio Dei* and so, inevitably, missions becomes involvement with all sorts of forms of ministry, with the only qualifier being that it must be cross-cultural. That qualification is unusual and, it seems to this reviewer, Biblically indefensible. More to the point, Jennings gives lip service to Stephen Neill's aphorism, "If everything is mission, nothing is mission," but in the end he falls prey to it.

Admirably, Jennings sets out to develop his thesis through some themes from 1 Peter. However, in the end, 1 Peter fades into the background and modern missiological themes take the forefront. While the author clearly respects Scripture and its authority, that respect does not come to full expression in this volume. Similarly, for a Presbyterian theologian it is rather surprising that the Reformed confessions receive no mention.

While there are some helpful reflections in *God the Real Superpower*, there is little of anything distinguishably Reformed, particularly in the confessional sense of the word. Certainly the approach to the field of missiology cannot be recognized as such. By and large, the study of missions continues to be an unplowed field for Reformed theology.

—Wes Bredenhof

Timothy Keller. *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith*. New York: Dutton, 2008. Pp. xv + 139. \$19.95 (cloth)

Tim Keller, the author of *The Reason for God*, which received *World Magazine's* book of the year award, again sets fingers to keyboard to produce a title that is bound to be read and republished for years to come. Writing in a mode that is both theological and sermonic, Keller sets upon an exposition of Jesus' renowned parable of the prodigal son. Keller's analysis comes with a twist, however, for while we often focus on the wayward, prodigal son of the parable, Keller, without neglecting the

younger brother, also shows us the stingy, lost elder brother of the parable; and, most significantly, he shows us the prodigal God of the parable. It is God who is the focus and the glory of the story. He is the *prodigal* God—prodigal in the sense of extravagant, overflowing, and recklessly generous in his love, mercy, patience, and grace. He is the God sinners most need if they would find rescue and a welcome home.

Thus, through the lens of this story Keller presents the heart and soul of the gospel. As such, this compact volume serves as an introduction to the Christian faith. But the book is not “just for beginners.” On the contrary, many Christians need to be “re-converted” to the gospel. To be sure, lost younger brothers need to read this book; but graceless elder brothers need to read it just as much.

In five short chapters the parable is unfolded. In two concluding chapters the parable’s implications are worked out, on the one hand showing us how the story gives a perspective for understanding the Bible as a whole, and on the other hand teaching us how to live in the world.

This book will convict you. Keller is adept at demonstrating the multiple ways in which church people today can play the role, indeed, mimic the behavior, share the attitudes, and practice the ingratitude and self-righteousness of the elder brother. This is a hard-hitting book! If you’re cozy in the conceit of your faith, if you secretly suppose God owes you favors for your commitment to him and sacrifice for his cause, if you treasure the snobbish attitude that God’s mercy belongs to the faithful, not to the faithless, then get ready to be exposed. Yet, like the elder brother in the parable, the invitation is extended to you to come join the celebration of grace.

In the course of Keller’s analysis the reader will discover why people are *pro* Jesus but *anti* church. Keller explores the dimensions of the younger brother’s lostness, indeed, how deep sin goes and what it is to understand sin’s depths. More importantly, Keller takes us to the deep, deep reach of God’s love for sinners.

This love of God reaches out to another kind of lostness as well. Keller helps us examine that other sort of lostness—that of the elder brother. In facing the elder brother, lost religious people are brought face-to-face with their repressed anger at God’s grace, their disgust for and sense of superiority toward the wayward rebels and ill-behaving mutineers of the world. The religious lost are also brought to examine themselves in their own mistaken devotion to God. Is it born of gratitude and love for the Father? Or is it slavish and resentful, thus empty? The elder brothers of the world, just like the younger brothers of the world, need to see their own desperate lostness.

While we are quick to recognize the younger brother’s sinful licentiousness, we turn a blind eye to the elder brother’s religious moralism. As Keller observes, many who turn their backs on Christianity have come from churches “brimming with elder-brother types.” The elder brother, in whose image many church people have been chiseled, doesn’t think he’s lost; nor does he know that he has failed to grasp the gospel fully and deeply. This misapprehension bears fruits, “being condescending, condemning, anxious, insecure, joyless, and angry all the time.”

Keller depicts for us, in the way of repentance, how we can live as true elder brothers. Keller also reminds us that this parable issues an invitation to all lost sinners to come home. A feast awaits us.

We hope that Keller's fine book finds a vast audience and is prayerfully pondered. This book's tone and grace, its call and invitation, are a summons to younger and elder brothers alike. Throughout its pages we are shown the heart of the Christian faith and the heart of our Father in heaven, *The Prodigal God*.

—J. Mark Beach

Anthony N.S. Lane. *A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. Pp. 174. \$16.99

Students of Calvin have long had available to them several significant sources which make a study of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* a slightly less daunting task. Ford Lewis Battles's *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin*, assisted by John Walchenbach (1980), presents a fairly detailed summary of the essential components of each section of Calvin's volumes. Also worthy of note is T.H.L. Parker's *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (1995). This work is essentially an examination of the four books of the *Institutes*, following its chapters and presentation of topics. Alternatively students could attempt something less ambitious than a full study of the Calvin's *Institutes* as a whole, and look instead to a compendium of that work, such as Hugh T. Kerr's *Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend* (1989), or Donald K. McKim's abridgement of the *Institutes* (2000).

A new study by Anthony N.S. Lane is similar but distinct from each of these prior projects. Lane is professor of historical theology and director of research at the London School of Theology, and a well-known Calvin scholar. As a reader's guide to the *Institutes* this volume is not to be read on its own, i.e., it is not at all intended to be used independent of Calvin's *Institutes*; rather, it is a volume that assists readers as they make their way through Calvin's work, chapter by chapter, section by section. Moreover, this is a guide to the Battle's translation of the *Institutes* in the Library of Christian Classics series, edited by John T. McNeill. Thus Lane will refer readers from time-to-time to footnotes and references from the Battles/McNeill edition.

Lane's chapters usually begin with a short introduction, followed by a few questions that aim to orient the reader to the chief issues Calvin will be addressing; next comes the summary analysis of the sections. Lane's book is intended as a *guide*. Thus he informs readers which portions of the *Institutes* may well be skimmed by students or, at the very least, may be regarded as having lesser weight than other parts. Lane is adept at pointing readers to key sentences and phrases that get at the heart of Calvin's staked out position.

Besides the noble traits already noted about this work, another positive trait that ought to be mentioned is that Lane leaves himself out of the discussion, which means this work is not intended to be an evaluative analysis of the *Institutes*; instead, Lane simply presents Calvin to us.

This volume is modest in size, apt and reliable in its descriptions of Calvin's views, and delivers what is advertised. Those who wish to take a hike through the mountain peaks and valleys of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* will discover that Lane is a first-rate escort.

—J. Mark Beach

Mark J. Larson. *Calvin's Doctrine of the State: A Reformed Doctrine and its American Trajectory, the Revolutionary War, and the Founding of the Republic*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009. Pp. 129 + xvii. \$18.00

All of the Reformed and Presbyterian claim Calvin. Those who subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity may allege differences with those who adhere to the Westminster Standards, and vice-versa. Followers of either tradition, however, agree on the place of Calvin as spiritual father to the Reformed and Presbyterian movements and as such see themselves as being faithful to his legacy. Likewise, those who are not Reformed and Presbyterian have often vilified Calvin in a way that they have not attacked, say Luther, seeing Calvin as the cold, cruel, logician and systematizer of the Reformation. Surely Calvin must be one of the one most loved and hated figures in church history.

Among the opponents of Calvin, one often hears charges of theocracy, particularly with respect to Calvin's alleged role as the "autocrat of Geneva" and the part that he played in the execution of the heretic Servetus. Even many who would self-identify as Calvinists are unclear as to precisely what Calvin's doctrine of the state was and are unsure as to whether Calvin was or was not the kind of tyrant, if not to say, theocrat, that many claim him to have been. This short book by Mark Larson, an Orthodox Presbyterian pastor serving currently in New Jersey, who did a Ph.D. in this area under Richard Muller at Calvin Theological Seminary, goes a long way to clearing up the calumnies heaped upon Calvin by his detractors and even in clarifying his position on matters of church and state over against some of the followers of Calvin who have not been clear on the matter.

There are different ways of defining theocracy. Israel under the Sinaitic covenant is typically referred to as such, given that God is the direct ruler through functionaries. Classically, a theocracy involves clerical rule of the state (such as you have in Islam and other cultures) or, some have argued, a setting in which the church as an institution claims authority over the state (as did medieval Roman Catholicism, seen especially in something like the 1302 papal bull, *Unam Sanctam*). In Calvin's Geneva, neither of the above mentioned approaches to theocracy obtained. Larson writes, "Calvin believed in a separation of church and state in terms of their respective jurisdictions" (2). This "two-sphere doctrine meant that Calvin and the other pastors in Geneva would have no political authority" (2). In fact, Geneva tended, as did many cities that embraced the Reformation, to the opposite of the medieval Roman Catho-

lic Church claim of ecclesiastical hegemony: Erastianism, in which the state assumed control over the church within its borders. Given the often highly political and self-interested use of church discipline by Rome, in and long before the Reformation, it is little wonder that many Protestant magistrates made the opposite error and claimed that the state was over the church. Calvin rightly understood that church and state were distinct and that both spheres were under God.

Calvin was no theocrat, being thwarted, in fact, in many of his aspirations for both church and state in Geneva. Indeed, Calvin and his ministerial cohorts came to possess significant influence in the city, but as Larson argues, “indirect power [and influence] must not be confused with a theocratic government” (19). Calvin was happy for the church to possess its proper authority, the administration of the keys of the kingdom, and to leave to the state its exercise of the sword. Now it is the case that though Calvin believed in a proper institutional separation, he was no secularist, i.e., he did not believe that the state should be, or could be, neutral with respect to God, but that the state and its governors must take its place in submission to God and his law, though not as theonomically constructed (45-46).

With respect to the question of one of the state’s primary uses of the sword, the state’s right to prosecute warfare, Calvin affirmed, against the Anabaptists, that the state could rightly prosecute a war—that it was not simply a necessary evil—and, contra Islam and some Romanists (and Protestants like Bullinger and Vermigli), taught against the holy war concept (90). Calvin, for instance, in affirming the expiration of the judicial laws with the coming of the New Testament era, argued that neither the strictures of Deuteronomy 20 nor medieval siege warfare properly prevailed and that the magistrate was to act according to the law of charity, sparing non-combatants and allowing the surrender of combatants. This is classic just war, over against holy war, doctrine.

This last point about warfare highlights one of Larson’s main concerns in this book: Calvin, contra the libel of some opponents, did not advocate holy warfare as a part of his alleged theocratic tendencies. Calvin, together with most of the other Protestants, turned away from the holy warfare doctrine advocated by some at Rome in support of the crusades and turned back to the Augustinian and Aquinian doctrine of just war and the classic three conditions necessary for its implementation (24-25).

The question that remained was that of the right to resist tyranny. Could, or should, a tyrant rightly be overthrown and under what circumstances? It is well-known that Beza, Calvin’s successor in Geneva, taught the right of resistance (even for the individual), in the aftermath of the horrible St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (1572). Some who followed Beza—Knox, Buchanan, Rutherford, et al.—taught a stronger, even more positive right of resistance. What of Calvin? State tyranny called for remedies of three sorts, Calvin argued: (1) prayer; (2) an avenger (perhaps as a result of prayer), i.e., some one used of God to deliver the distressed; and, (3) an institutional remedy. “Here, Calvin appealed to the existence of the *populares magistratus* in *Institutes* IV.20.31, calling them

'magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings' (54). Calvin meant something by this a little different than did Beza when he spoke of the lower magistrates (e.g., local rulers resisting tyrannous provincial ones). For Calvin, "the idea in the expression *populares magistratus* was that these individuals constituted a representative body that was appointed in an elective manner" (57). Calvin had a thorough knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman history and was especially sympathetic to Cicero and company in their protests against the supplanting of the Republic with an empire. Calvin looked, in other words, to elected officials to be a check on monarchs and other hereditary rulers who might have absolutist tendencies.

One might rightly say, then, that the political legacy of Calvin is republican government (81-99). Calvin thought that monarchies tended to degrade to absolutism, and he opposed absolutism, whether in a monarchy not subject to the law or in the rule of the church by the Roman pontiff. Calvin also distrusted democracy, perhaps more than any form of government, believing that it tended to anarchy. A constitutional monarchy or republic provided for the kind of moderated government that Calvin thought best. While Calvin did not believe that the Bible prescribed a particular form of government, he did tend to think that some form of republic might be ideal. Larson proceeds to show how that the U. S. Constitution tracks with Calvin's ideals and that Madison in the Federalist Papers extols a republic over a democracy on grounds similar to Calvin's (94-96).

Finally, Larson reminds us how that we have advanced since Calvin's time—moving past the "disregard for liberty of conscience that Calvin manifested in continuity with the medieval mindset"—and have "now a vision for a society that is not only virtuous, but also free" (101). Larson notes such in Kuyper, among others. Calvin, in contrast to the Erastianism of Bullinger, also provided for the spiritual independency of the church. Larson concludes that Calvin's doctrine of the state is a worthy, lasting legacy that we would do well to appreciate and implement with virtue (102-103). Larson presents a carefully drawn "Calvin in context" that should be of interest and use to all concerned about matters of state.

—Alan D. Strange

Peter J. Leithart. *1 & 2 Kings*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Pp. 304. \$29.99 (cloth)

This commentary on Kings is the first to appear in the Old Testament section of a new series of commentaries, launched by Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing. It follows the work on the book of Acts by Jaroslav Pelikan. The author of this work on Kings, Dr. Peter Leithart, is an ordained office-bearer in the Presbyterian Church in America, a pastor of the Trinity Reformed Church in Moscow, Idaho, and a professor of theology and literature at New Saint Andrews College, also in Moscow. He brings to bear his background in literature, as well as his ability in He-

brew, theology, philosophy, and rhetoric in the writing of this commentary.

This series, the Brazos Theological Commentary, seeks to produce commentaries written by scholars who are theologians, not first of all people who are merely technicians in grammar and ancient texts. In the preface to the series, R.R. Reno points out that the second-century church father Irenaeus held to a “rule of truth” passed down in tradition, a “rule” that sought to put together the pieces of a grand mosaic, as it were, the pieces of which are the various texts and parts of the Bible itself. The communal work of Biblical interpretation, explanation, and teaching led to the articulation of catholic Christian orthodoxy, especially in the early days of the church as it battled against Gnostic heresies, among others. Such doctrine from the early days of the church “provides the clarifying principles that guide exegetical judgment toward a coherent overall reading of Scripture as a unified witness,” writes Reno (8).

Reno points out that the Brazos series writers stand in the tradition of the Nicene Creed (10). Yet that confessional tradition does not prescribe how the various pieces of the Biblical mosaic will always be assembled. “We have no clear answer to the question of whether exegesis guided by doctrine is antithetical to or compatible with the now-old modern methods of historical-critical inquiry. Truth ... knows no contradiction,” he writes (11). The general editors of the series hold the various commentators to no “particular hermeneutical theory,” thus rendering the series “tentative and exploratory” (11). Thus, as in any commentary series that has several different writers, *caveat emptor*, “let the buyer beware,” or, to put it more gently, the commentary will be as good as the writer is able to bring to bear his knowledge of Scripture, the original languages, literary artifice, as well as Biblical and systematic theology. Does the author know the whole as well as the parts? Can he piece the mosaic parts together so that the big picture emerges, and can he do so in an engaging way, such that the wonder of God’s written revelation comes through in the comments and glosses?

Furthermore, the Brazos Theological Commentary is “deliberatively ecumenical in scope,” writes Reno (11). Such is apparent by the second commentary to appear in the series. Jaroslav Pelikan authored the first book in the series, and he comes from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Peter Leithart, author of this book on Kings, comes from the orthodox Protestant tradition, namely, the Presbyterian Church in America. The “central premise in this commentary series is that doctrine provides structure and cogency to scriptural interpretation,” says Reno. Thus the Brazos series is unashamedly confessional in its grand intention, but confessional in a very broadly ecumenical way. Time will tell, as more commentaries appear in the series, on how well this grand purpose will succeed.

In his own introduction to his work, Leithart notes the insights of Noth and the school of thought that views Kings as part of the so-called “Deuteronomic history,” but he seeks to put Kings in a larger canonical context (17ff.). The element of wisdom, royal and otherwise, also informs us in our reading of Kings. Kings could be “read as a historical endorse-

ment of the viewpoint of Proverbs” (19). Royal wisdom, even Solomonic wisdom, ultimately does not deliver the covenant people of God once they have sinned. Wisdom cannot save; the “curse still hangs over north and south: ‘Dying, you shall die’” (20).

Yet Kings is also gospel. The amazing patience of Yahweh, Israel’s God, comes through repeatedly in the book. Marcion has no leg to stand on when the message of Kings is truly heard. Indeed, while the Torah prescribes a death sentence for those who sin, Yahweh’s promises in his covenant remain, and he will not change his mind. “The book of Kings tells the story of the death and resurrection of David’s dynasty, the death and resurrection of David’s son” (23). The story that unfolds before the reader is an outline of the fleshed out work of Jesus Christ, and that outline in Kings is to be heard as gospel, good news.

Such a message is also ecclesial, not just evangelical. Leithart brings out some interesting points on the fact of Israel’s political and liturgical schism and how such division (between Israel and Judah) speaks to the post-Reformation divisions within Christendom. Idolatry lies at the heart of the problem in the covenant community, both in the north and in the south. Yahweh addresses both realms with his ground troops, the prophets. Yahweh will speak to the nation as a whole—and continues to do so—even while he builds up a faithful community around particular prophets (e.g., Elisha and the “sons of the prophets”). Yet in the end, it is not human efforts at church unity that will win the day: only God and God alone will build his church and unite his church. Leithart’s perspective may be challenging at this point; he certainly provides his readers with food for thought.

Leithart divides this commentary into appropriately delineated pericopes. No section is lengthy in analysis, and he does not engage in detailed discussion of historical background, syntax, or the like; he assumes that the thoughtful reader has a working knowledge of such. Nor is such really the purpose of this type of “theological commentary.” This is not to say that Leithart is unskilled in the original language of the Hebrew Bible. At appropriate places we get references to (unpointed) Hebrew text. He provides here a perspective that goes beyond mere parsing of words and diagramming of sentences. Often he draws our attention to (intentional) wordplays in the Hebrew text, chiasms, verbal echoes, instances of irony, and other literary artistry in the Old Testament, the very things that make the Bible the engaging book of divine revelation and covenantal address that it is. Being a student and teacher of literature enables Leithart to listen to the text closely and to write in such a way that also keeps the reader interested. He employs an intelligent level of rhetoric, not the plodding and prosaic discourse found in many other commentaries.

The discussion of 1 Kings 8:1-66 is one of Leithart’s finest in which he points out that the architectural temple anticipates the incarnational temple, Jesus Christ. The name of God dwells in that place, thus looking ahead to the coming of the second Person of the Trinity, in whom the name of God now dwells. Jesus Christ is the “earthly address of God ... the one toward whom we address our prayers and through whom our

prayers are heard by our Father in heaven" (69). Christological connections are frequently held up for the reader.

There are some connections that the author makes that appear to be literary and theological stretches, occasionally bordering on the almost bizarre. For example, on page 36 the seven phrases suggest the seven-day creation week. In addition, a seven-fold list of things that the Queen of Sheba "sees" is "analogous to the wisdom of Yahweh ... in the seven days of creation" (78). Similarly, Jehu's coup consists of seven acts of destruction, again evoking the seven days of creation in Leithart's mind (222, 223). And again on page 37 a fourfold reference suggests the four corners of the world. Why that is *necessarily* so is not made clear to readers.

Leithart also writes on page 51, "Solomon is a new Joseph, offering bread to hungry nations." What evidence is there that these nations are hungry in the same way that the Middle Eastern world was hungry during the time of Joseph in Egypt? Perhaps Leithart might temper his words to say that Solomon bears some analogies to what Joseph did earlier in Egypt. In Joseph's day people were nearly lined up to obtain food from Egypt, but such does not appear to be the case in the time of Solomon.

Furthermore, Leithart says on page 53, "Solomon dispenses justice like a god..." Like *a god* (emphasis added)? How about like a righteous king (cf. Ps. 72)? Comparing Solomon's work to that of a "god" is rhetorical overkill on Leithart's part. If one is theologically literate as well as quite familiar with the biblical-theological approach of Geerhardus Vos, S.G. de Graaf, etc., one can "fill in the gaps," so to speak, and one can make sense of some statements that seem to be at times over-reaching.

The above comments are not intended to disparage the kind of typological approach that he uses, either in its broad strokes or in every instance of his use thereof in this commentary. Leithart very rightly sees the story told in Kings as part and parcel of the larger redemptive drama that is inextricably connected to the finished work of Jesus Christ, the last Adam and great David's greater Son. Since the Old Testament is truly about Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 24:27,44; 2 Tim. 3:15,16), it is most appropriate to see redemptive-historical sketches and outlines (*typoi*) of Jesus Christ in the people, events, and institutions revealed also in Kings. Indeed, Leithart typically ends a chapter discussion of the various pericopes with a paragraph (or more) that draws our attention to the larger story that is completed in Christ. Such comments are warmly appreciated by this reviewer. One hopes that other Old Testament commentaries in the Brazos series will take a similar approach and thus avoid the tendency, even among conservative scholars, to write commentaries in an historicist, critical fashion, leaving the Christological connections un-addressed and unmade. If Old Testament sermons that leave out Christ are "unchristian," then commentaries on the Old Testament that are written by Christians but leave out Christ, are themselves "unchristian." In the Old Testament the Word of God is "becoming flesh" (to borrow the wording of Horace Hummel's isagogical work on the Old Testament), and therefore Jesus Christ cannot be left out of the theological exegesis of the

book of Kings. In that regard Leithart's commentary succeeds at many turns.

Writing in an ecumenical context, Leithart acknowledges his indebtedness to James Jordan, particularly his 1988 work *Through New Eyes*. Leithart also draws upon many writers, including Dale Ralph Davis, John Milbank, M.B. Van't Veer, and Jerome Walsh, among others. Gregory Beale's work on the temple is noticeably absent from his bibliography, although one can excuse the author here: Leithart's perspective on the temple and its significance is very similar to that of Beale, and one cannot possibly read everything that has been written on the temple and its role in the redemptive-history of Israel!

Leithart frequently breaks away from the text and its theology to give his perspectives on a number of extra-theological topics that are suggested by or derived from the text. Such excursions take us beyond theology to areas of ecclesiology, human psychology, politics, and many others. Samples of such excursions include the question of violence in its various forms (40ff.), the *imago Dei* (49ff.), the nature of the self (84), and civil religion (152f.), to name just a few. Leithart also comments on the nature of church and state relationships, especially in the light of Lockean assumptions in America (61ff.). This comes in a chapter that deals with 1 Kings 7:1-12, the building of Solomon's own palace, which was located adjacent to the LORD's own temple. The author suggests that cultural activity and "human making" are extensions of the intertrinitarian activity of God (1 Kings 9), an intriguing idea. Leithart also addresses what is meant by "public" (different senses) and "private" (79f.).

There are some helpful emphases in Leithart's treatment of Kings. First, he underscores the fact that the split into northern Israel and southern Judah does not mean that there are now two "peoples" of God (e.g., 234). The covenant nation, in fact, remains one church, if you will, and therefore Yahweh is going to wrestle with his people in both realms. Politically, there may be two nations, one ruled by the Davidic dynasty (based on God's promises in 2 Samuel 7) and the other ruled by a great variety of kings, but the children of Israel are still the objects of God's longsuffering patience and covenantal address. There are still seven thousand *in the north* who have not genuflected before Baal, and therefore they also need and do receive the ministry of God's prophets. The northern people are in great trouble, given the proclivities of their rulers to tolerate the golden calves' cult at Bethel and Dan, but Yahweh will not let Israel slide off into apostasy without addressing them repeatedly through his servants the prophets.

Another welcome emphasis in Leithart's treatment of Kings is the attention he gives to the role of the Gentiles in Temple construction. Hiram of Phoenicia provides men and material to assist in building the Temple of Solomon. In this there is the great outline of God's intention, already announced in Genesis 12:1-3, that the Gentiles will also be grafted into God's covenant people. Kings also opens the windows somewhat to allow readers to see that.

In a kind of summary statement about the book of Kings, Leithart writes that the "story of 1-2 Kings is the story of a rejected temple, a re-

jected and suffering Messiah and mediator, a temple destroyed but destined to be raised on the third day. A temple Christology thus works out in a narrative of cross and empty tomb" (70).

Errors in the book are minimal. On page 61 in the second to last paragraph, the line that reads "... system differs form this common ideology..." should read "... system differs from this common ideology...." The antecedent of "he" is unclear on page 115 in this sentence: "When Baasha builds Ramah within Judah's territory, he sends money to the Arameans, asking them to attack Baasha from the north and force him...." Is Baasha paying Arameans to attack ... Baasha? Leithart means Judean king Asa from the previous sentence, but the sentence is somewhat ambiguous in its current reading.

All in all, this book is a welcome addition to the body of commentary literature that expounds the book of Kings for the reader who wishes to see how its "theology" is truly connected to the fuller mosaic of Biblical revelation and the "rule of truth" that Irenaeus articulated in his context in the early Christian church. One is not bored with abstract ideas in reading Leithart on Kings, but his content and writing style are both engaging and stimulating. Preachers will learn a great deal about the literary artistry of Kings and will likely pick up many suggestive sermonic and teaching points in this work.

The book concludes with an extensive bibliography as well as a subject index and Scripture index, all of which is helpful for further reading on the many points Leithart touches on.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. Pp. 967. \$49.99 (cloth)

Longman and Enns' *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* is the third of four "Black Dictionaries" on OT literature to be published by InterVarsity Press. It treats not only Psalms, Job, and Proverbs, but the five *Megillot* (Festal Scrolls): Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations and Esther. In this way all the books in the third division of the Hebrew Bible are covered, with the exception of Daniel (included in the forthcoming volume on the prophets) and Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles (treated in the volume on the historical books). A number of leading scholars are contributors, for example: John Goldingay, Cynthia Miller, Leo Perdue, Marvin Sweeney, Willem VanGemeren and Edwin Yamauchi. The articles summarize mainstream scholarship on a wide variety of topics of interest to those working in this corpus of the Bible and have large, up-to-date bibliographies. The Scripture index looks helpful (with 5 pages of references just to the Psalms).

For each of the biblical books there are three separate treatments. The first handles not only traditional concerns of modern academic study (authorship, date of composition, historical setting, genre, form,

theological message, etc.) but highlights literary concerns as well (eg. intention, imagery, literary style, rhetorical strategy, plot, characterization, canonical position). The second treatment of the book deals with issues regarding its ancient Near Eastern background that seem very relevant. And there is a third major section for each canonical book treating its history of interpretation. Such an approach is groundbreaking and very welcome. In a day in which dominant historical-critical approaches are being seriously questioned, pastor and scholar alike will find help in the interpretative labors of previous generations. We read not only of how the book was handled in the New Testament, but also in the patristic and medieval periods, in early and later Jewish tradition, as well as in the Reformation and Modern periods that are more familiar to us. (An exception to the general neglect of the 17th and 18th centuries is Jonathan Edwards on Proverbs).

The wide variety of articles treating subjects and disciplines of interest to those exploring the *Kethuvim*/Writings could prove helpful to a pastor not yet at home with the terminology of modern linguistic and literary approaches. For example, articles on poetics, ellipsis, terseness, imagery of various sorts, parallelism, hermeneutics and intertextuality look interesting. The topic of wisdom is explored from various angles. There are also substantial articles on biblical characters such as Boaz, David, Esther, Job and Solomon. Keeping in mind that the points of view represented in this volume are myriad and may come from the less conservative wings of international evangelicalism, I would warmly recommend this volume to a preacher expounding one of the wisdom and poetry books. The *Dictionary* offers a lot of helpful, accessible material at a reasonable price.

—Charles Telfer

Bruce L. McCormack, editor. *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2008. Pp. 271. \$26.99

This book, consisting of essays written by a variety of authors who may be characterized as broadly evangelical, is composed of four parts. Part one is entitled “New Testament and Early Christian Origins of the Doctrine of God” and contains two lectures: one by N.T. Wright treating “Christian Origins and the Question of God,” and the other by D. A. Carson, “The Wrath of God.” Part two receives the heading “Historical Perspectives.” This part also contains two lectures: the first by Paul Helm treating Calvin on the hiddenness of God and Oliver D. Crisp taking up Jonathan Edwards’s view of God, specifically Trinity, Individuation, and Divine Simplicity. Part three is called “Theological Perspectives.” It consists of five lectures, the most notable being Bruce McCormack’s presentation of Karl Barth’s thinking on the actuality of God, wherein he also engages Open Theism. Other topics under part three include God’s Aseity, God’s Compassion, God’s Sovereignty, and God and the Cross. Part four is aptly designated, “Practical Theology Perspectives,” and pre-

sents a single lecture by Donald Macleod, with the title “The Doctrine of God and Pastoral Care.” This lecture should be of interest to pastors and anyone engaged in the work of Christian counseling.

These essays were first presented as lectures at the eleventh Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, 2005. Prefacing these lectures is a sermon by David F. Wright entitled, “The Lamb That Was Slain.”

The editor of these essays, Bruce L. McCormack, aptly describes himself as an evangelical Barthian, even as he aptly characterizes the contributors to this volume as running the gambit of those who are overtly committed to “classical Theism” (such as Paul Helm) to those who are cautiously critical of it (such as himself). Between these two poles the various authors tilt toward the pro or the con side of the “classical Theism” equation.

The most controversial topics addressed in this collection include the validity or invalidity of such concepts as divine simplicity in relation to God’s triunity, divine impassibility and God’s wrath, as well as the question of suffering, divine love and the necessity of grace, and the becomingness of God.

These essays are well-written, informative, and sometimes provocative as well. For any who wish to deepen their understanding of God and the current discussion about God among representatives of the broad evangelical tradition, this book is a great guide to the contemporary conversation.

—J. Mark Beach

Douglas J. Moo. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008. Pp. xvi + 408. \$44.00 (cloth)

Douglas J. Moo is Blanchard Professor of New Testament at Wheaton Graduate School. This volume joins his previous commentary on James, also in the Pillar series.

Like its predecessor, this commentary blends exposition of the biblical text with attention to recent discussions and publications on these Bible books. Particularly important and useful are the author’s treatment of introductory matters (pp. 3-71 for Colossians, and pp. 357-378 for Philemon), where we find a good example of the author’s breadth and balance, never losing focus and always leading us patiently through thickets of disputed and disputable matters. What makes commentary introductions like these useful is that they provide a point of entrance into the whole and thereby lend perspective on the parts. A helpful commentary introduction supplies an “angle of coherence” that can serve as a framework for wrestling with the meaning of individual passages.

For example, Moo concludes the introduction to his commentary on Philemon with an exegetical summary that can help open almost every section of the epistle: “This short private letter stands, then, as an important reminder of the communitarian aspect of Christianity that many of

us, in our individualist cultures, are so prone to forget. In Christ we belong to one another; we enjoy each other's company and support; and we are obliged to support, to the point of sacrificing our own time, interests, and money, our brothers and sisters" (378). Naturally, he is offering at the *beginning* of our reading something he could formulate only at the *end* of his reflection, but this illustrates that so-called inductive Bible study neither can nor should ever begin without a revisable apriori framework of understanding with respect to what is being studied. In addition, this kind of summary shows the usefulness of seeking to discern the unified message of a letter like Colossians or Philemon. Most of the New Testament writings were occasional or situation-specific, and they possess a coherence and unity that can easily be obscured or injured when they are employed principally for proof-texting doctrinal and ethical verities.

The author's treatment of the purposes of these respective letters brings us to the heart of their exegesis and application. He sets out the alternative positions clearly and fairly, scattering gentle appeals along the way for appreciating the advantages of each position while moving on toward a more satisfying resolution of particular questions. Moo is not convinced that Paul was opposing "basic Judaism" in Colossians, but rather sees the target as a blend of false teachings undergirding a syncretistic program of visions and asceticism, drawn partly from Judaism, partly from Hellenism.

No one who studies Philemon can avoid reflecting on the social dimensions of the gospel and its application. Moo admits that using the New Testament to think theologically about the *institution* of slavery requires a broader theological and hermeneutical approach. In this context, then, he asks the hard question: Why did Paul and other New Testament Christians appear not to require Christian slave owners to release their slaves? The Bible seems to be silent about Christian slave-owning. Moo offers the tentative suggestion that the New Testament writers "did not always recognize the implications of the theological principles that they themselves enunciated" (377). In our day, says Moo, we rightly draw from apostolic teaching the conclusion that no apostle himself drew, namely, that Christians may not own slaves. Here readers will recognize similarities to William J. Webb's defense of his own "redemptive-movement hermeneutic." Although Moo sees problems with Webb's proposal and the way he works it out (particularly regarding the roles of women), he is willing to adopt the general paradigm that Webb advocates (see note 44 on page 377). Given Moo's sympathy for Webb's view, we would have been helped with a more detailed explanation of the precise differences in the hermeneutical moves involved in these two issues, especially since developments in the church's attitude toward owning slaves has become the basis for insisting that the church develop similarly in its attitude regarding the role of women in the church.

As an up-to-date interaction with the biblical text and its interpreters, this evangelical contribution belongs in every pastor's library, not first as a book to be consulted occasionally when confronting a passage

in Colossians or Philemon, but first as a book to be read from cover to cover for its own unifying theme and message.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Robert A. Peterson. *Election and Free Will: God's Gracious Choice and Our Responsibility*. Explorations in Biblical Theology: A Series, ed. Robert A. Peterson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publications, 2007. Pp. xi + 208. \$14.99

If you are a pastor looking for a reliable book about predestination, especially a book that is easy to understand and may be safely placed into the hands of parishioners for study, Peterson's *Election and Free Will* is a good choice.

Noteworthy about this study is that it begins by issuing a call to dial down the rancor and nasty polemics that often characterize discussions of this doctrine. Peterson is not interested in spreading more malice or in instilling more acrimony in the predestination/free will debate. He is however interested in accenting a powerful biblical theme—divine election—and in presenting this doctrine as a remedy to the insecurity modern believers experience, for the stage of contemporary life is rife with dysfunctional families, even as it is characterized by technological loneliness, radical autonomy; and there is ever before us the menace of terrorism.

This book unfolds by offering an account of the election and free will debate within church history. All the major players and most weighty ecclesiastical pronouncements on these issues are briefly surveyed. Next Peterson takes up the doctrine of election from Scripture, looking first at the Old Testament, then at the Gospels and Acts, the General Epistles and Revelation (in that order), followed by two chapters devoted to the Epistles of Paul. Peterson helpfully and clearly sets forth the biblical teaching on election as presented in Scripture, as he takes up the diverse ways the idea of election is used in the Bible, along with various neighboring issues and terms.

A separate chapter is given to free will. Here Peterson properly distinguishes between true freedom and freedom of choice, for post-fall human beings lost true freedom, though they retained their ability to be choice-makers. In Christ, being regenerated and redeemed, believers (this side of glory) regain a measure of true freedom but await the completeness of this gift, which is restored again in full in the state of glory. In this chapter Peterson also takes up the perplexing topic: Why some persons are saved and why persons are condemned? In addition, he explores the parameters of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, for each must be given its due.

Two remaining chapters follow: "The Bible's Story of Election," which explores this theme redemptive-historically or as a narrative; and "Objections to and Applications of Election," which deals with issues like our response to election, the incentives for evangelism in light of election, assurance of salvation, etc.

This book can be used as an adult study book as well, since there are a set of questions to each chapter appended. This book is fresh and well-written, easy to understand and just what the theologian ordered for the motivated layperson.

—J. Mark Beach

Stuart Robinson. *The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel*. 1858; rpt., Willow Grove, PA: Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2009. Pp. 229. \$10.00

As Craig Troxel notes in the foreword to this newly reprinted edition of Stuart Robinson's book, ecclesiology has become the theological topic of the hour. Though Robinson may be comparatively unknown to contemporaries, what he has to say about ecclesiology, particularly from a Reformed and Presbyterian perspective, needs to be brought into this important discussion that we are all now having on ecclesiology. If the early church had a special focus on theology proper, anthropology, and Christology and the Reformation corrected the faulty soteriology of the Middle Ages, these post-Reformational times have seen much ecclesiological discussion, some fruitful and other not so fruitful (27). Robinson makes a helpful contribution to this colloquy by identifying and developing the genius of Calvinism.

The genius of Calvinism, according to Troxell's summary of Robinson, is that "Calvin wedded his doctrine of the church to the doctrine of predestination" (8; 30-37). This means that ecclesiology, ultimately, is rooted in theology proper and the outworking of that decree in redemptive history (38-59). This "led Robinson to stress the centrality of Christology in ecclesiology and Christ's ongoing ministry in his threefold office" (9; 67-70). Christ's threefold office has particular reference to his mediatorial work for his people—the church—and it is for the church and in the church that this all unfolds and is applied.

For Robinson, "the structure of biblical revelation builds upon the covenant, and each successive covenant moves forward to the anticipated King, with his kingdom in the church. The church is the culmination of the inevitable outworking of Christ's fulfilling of the covenant of redemption among those called out from the world to form his church and receive his ministry. Thus, the 'necessity of the church' predicates the ongoing necessity of the work of Christ. Christ perpetually fulfills his work of redemption as prophet, priest and king in and for his church. As long as Christ continues to carry out his work of presiding over his church through his threefold office, the church continues to be an 'essential element' of the gospel" (10).

One of the leading implications of Christ's headship over the church has to do with church power. "The source, rule, limits, and nature of church power ultimately find their common referent in Christ" (10). In this respect, Robinson was zealous to distinguish the power of the church, i.e., the power of the keys, in gathering and perfecting the saints, from the temporal power of the state. He was concerned, in other words, with what 19th century Old School Presbyterians meant when they spoke

of the “spirituality of the church”: the conviction that the church was a spiritual institution and was to confine itself to matters spiritual, leaving the temporal to the state.

Robinson was concerned, as were his Scottish forebears, to challenge a priority for the spirituality of the church and by this to escape the baneful effects of Erastianism, in which the state claims hegemony over the church. One may well wonder why Robinson, being in a land with no established church, would concern himself over Erastianism. Troxell argues: “In America, Robinson feared that the force of public opinion and egalitarianism would virtually negate the idea that Christ had established a spiritual government distinct from the civil” (11). At the same time, however, Robinson also rather explicitly saw the American experiment/project as an opportunity for a hitherto unknown flourishing of the spirituality of the church, absent suzerainty claims on the part of the state that had afflicted the Reformed churches both on the continent and in Scotland (95).

It is at this point perhaps helpful to note that this book concludes with Thomas A. Peck’s *Memorial of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Stuart Robinson*. Peck’s essay serves to give some historical context for the particulars of Robinson’s doctrine of the spirituality of the church. Robinson was quite concerned with the arguments against slavery being forwarded by some in the church and wanted clearly to distinguish between the province of the state and that of the church. To gauge his precise position in this respect, this extended quote from pp. 211-212 (and 65-66) should prove useful:

Touching the distinction between the power ecclesiastical and the civil power, which latter is also ordained of God, the points of contrast are so numerous and so fundamental that nothing but the confusion of mind arising from the oppression of Cæsar and antichrist, backed by the power of Cæsar, could ever have caused the obscurity and inconsistency of the church’s testimony in modern times. For they have nothing in common, except that both powers are of divine authority, both concern the race of mankind, and both were instituted for the glory of God as a final end. In respect to all else, their origin, nature, and immediate end, and their mode of exercising the power, they differ fundamentally. Thus they differ:

1. In that the civil power derives its authority from God as the Author of nature, whilst the ecclesiastical comes alone from Jesus as Mediator.
2. In that the rule for the guidance of the civil power in its existence is the light of nature and reason, the law which the Author of nature reveals through reason to man; but the rule for the guidance of ecclesiastical power in its exercise is that light which, as Prophet of the church, Jesus Christ has revealed in his word. It is a government under statute laws already enacted by the King.
3. They differ in that the scope and aim of the civil power are limited properly to things seen and temporal; the scope and aim of ecclesiastical power are things unseen and spiritual. *Religious* is a term not predicable of the acts of the state; *political* is a term not predicable of the acts of the church. The things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ are things concerning which Cæsar can have rightfully no cognizance, except indirectly

and incidentally, as these things palpably affect the temporal and civil concerns of men; and even then Cæsar cannot be too jealously watched by the church. The things pertaining to the kingdom of Cæsar are matters of which the church of Christ, as an organic government, can have no cognizance, except incidentally and remotely, as affecting the spiritual interests of men; and even then the church cannot watch herself too jealously.

4. They differ in that the significant symbol of the civil power is the sword; its government is one of force, a terror to evil-doers; but the significant symbol of church power is the keys, its government only ministerial, the functions of its officers to open and close and have a care of a house already complete as to its structure externally, and internally organized and provided.

5. They differ in that civil power may be exercised as a '*several*' power by one judge, magistrate, or governor; but all ecclesiastical power pertaining to government is a joint power only, and to be exercised by tribunals. The Head of the government has not seen fit to confer spiritual power of jurisdiction in any power upon a single man, nor authorized the exercise of the functions of rule in the spiritual commonwealth as a *several* power.

While these points warrant a more extended analysis than this writer will here give them, perhaps for now it will suffice to highlight a few potential problems. With respect to his first point, one might well ask, what of the cosmic lordship of Christ in which Christ has dominion over all? Granted that Christ is King of the church in a particular way, has he no broader kingship over the sphere or realm of the state (as well as other areas outside church and state)? With respect to the second point, one might well ask whether this "law which the Author of nature reveals through reason to man" is not the same as the Mosaic law (WCF 19:1, 2, and 6 would suggest that it is) and thus that "rule for the guidance of the civil power" would appear not only in the conscience even of unbelievers (Romans 2:14-15) but explicitly in divine writ? Much more could be said here, not the least being that Robinson's ecclesiology has much to commend it, including his desire to maintain the spirituality of the church, even if some of his conclusions might be contested.

This invaluable book also contains, in a series of appendices, arranged in chronological order, reprints of important works treating ecclesiology in the Scottish Presbyterian tradition: the First Book of Discipline (1560), the Second Book of Discipline (1588), Baillie's Letter on the Westminster Assembly (1643), Gillespie's Notes on the Assembly (1644), Votes passed in the Assembly concerning the discipline and government of the church (1643-44), and the Form of Government adopted by the Assembly (1645). These historical documents ought to be studied by all Presbyterians so that the origins of our polity might better be understood. For those wanting to recapture a high view of the church, Robinson's work and the accompany documents are indispensable.

—Alan D. Strange

Garth M. Rosell. *The Surprising Work of God: Harold J. Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 268. \$19.99

Students of the Reformed faith have commonly observed that the First Great Awakening of the eighteenth century was typically Calvinistic while the Second Great Awakening of the nineteenth century was typically more Arminian (moving toward Pelagian). In more recent years, some Reformed churchmen, critical of both Awakenings, have opined that the two Awakenings have more in common than ordinarily supposed and are of the same ilk generally. Garth Rosell, in this work, agrees that there is essential concord not only between the Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also between both of them and the one about which he writes, the “rebirth of evangelicalism,” as he calls it, that occurred in mid-twentieth century America. The difference between Rosell and the aforementioned churchmen is that Rosell heartily supports all these revival movements. He even argues that the spread of the twentieth century revival of evangelicalism in America contributed to the development of global Christianity that we have witnessed in recent decades, celebrated particularly in the writings of Philip Jenkins.

Rosell’s title, *The Surprising Work of God*, evokes Jonathan Edwards’s employment of a similar phrase with reference to a revival in Northampton, Massachusetts, where Edwards ministered, in 1735. Rosell’s contention, following Mark Noll, is that evangelicalism began in the First and Second Great Awakenings and that “the rebirth of evangelicalism” that occurred under Harold J. Ockenga, Billy Graham, and others, beginning in the 1940s, was a Third Great Awakening that has now universalized in the global South. Garth Rosell is well-situated to tell this story, being the son of Merv Rosell—a close associate of Graham and company in evangelistic work—and a professor of church history at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Rosell is also former director of the Ockenga Institute at Gordon-Conwell and has a thorough knowledge of the Ockenga papers, of which he made extensive use in the writing of this book.

Rosell’s history is in large measure a biography of Harold Ockenga. While Billy Graham was the popular face of the movement that has come to be known as neo-evangelicalism, Ockenga was the central intellectual figure. Born in Chicago in 1905, Ockenga, a studious, serious, spiritual youngster, went from there to study at Taylor University in Indiana before proceeding to Princeton Theological Seminary and then to Westminster Theological Seminary. Ockenga decided to make the move to Westminster, following after J. Gresham Machen, not because he was a staunch Presbyterian—he was a Methodist then and when he was graduated from Westminster—but because he perceived that Machen and company were seeking to stand firm on Scripture over against the ever encroaching biblical higher criticism and liberalism of the day. Machen’s support of Ockenga before the latter became a Presbyterian provides a little window into the willingness of Machen to support able men who believed God’s Word even when those men may have been lacking in

some respects. This writer does not take that as a detraction from but part of the measure of Machen's greatness.

Rosell did become a Presbyterian (USA), being ordained in 1931 as an Assistant Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, of which Clarence McCartney was pastor. There he was quite active in youth work and continued to edify congregants with his considerable homiletical skills (he was a rather impressive orator). He was able to begin a Ph.D. at the University of Pittsburgh before being called to pastor nearby Point Breeze Presbyterian Church, where he served from 1931-37. This church increased considerably under its able pastor and he got married during these years, after abandoning a rather idiosyncratic approach to wife-seeking that he had earlier adopted. He studied Marxism at the University of Pittsburgh and had a keen sense of the naturalism and secularism that comprised modernism and threatened the theism of the Christian faith. Ockenga sensed the spiritual malaise that afflicted pre-World War II America and he longed for a time in which spiritual awakening and revival would occur that would serve both to unite Christians and convert unbelievers.

Ockenga continued to express an ardent spirit for revival and found himself coming to the attention of wider circles, receiving a call from the famous Park Street Church of Boston in 1936 (serving there as pastor until 1969). Park Street was one of the leading evangelical pulpits in the land and it was from this place that Ockenga went on to be one of the founders of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE, 1942) and president of Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), leaving Park Street only to serve at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, of which he was president from its founding in 1969 until his retirement in 1979.

According to Rosell, "Park Street Church became a kind of microcosm or visible embodiment of a major segment of the larger evangelical movement itself. Under Ockenga's energetic leadership, the congregation embraced and sought to live out in its daily activities the core values that had given shape and direction to the American evangelical movement since its beginnings in the Great Awakening: the centrality of the cross, the church, the authority of the Bible, the necessity of conversion, the importance of spiritual renewal, and the task of world evangelization" (80). These themes shaped the rest of Ockenga's life and were at the heart of the "rebirth of evangelicalism" in mid-century America.

Ockenga believed, as did the man that he saw as his theological mentor, J. Gresham Machen, that modernism was a corrosive influence eroding the faith of the church (88). Ockenga thought that the solution to such was a revival as had earlier gripped New England and he began earnestly to preach, pray, and work for such. This desire for revival prompted cross-denominational cooperation, with the New England Fellowship, in which Ockenga had become active, giving rise ultimately to the NAE. Due to Ockenga's visionary oratory, he became the first president of the NAE and began crisscrossing the globe on its behalf. Rosell argues that, as important as the work of the NAE was, the "ten of thousands of converts that eventually populated the burgeoning evangelical

movement would come primarily from the massive youth revivals of the 1940s," particularly Youth for Christ International (106).

A host of youth movements arose in the wake of the Second World War (108-112), out of which emerged (in 1944) the incomparable Billy Graham, perhaps the most influential religious figure of the century. Graham and a host of others—Rosell refers to them as a "band of brothers (including Rosell's father, Merv)—began conducting extended meetings in a variety of places, soon to be called "crusades," and "revival" came in 1949 to Los Angeles, to Boston in 1950 and to New York City in 1957. These revivals resulted in scores of thousands professing faith in Christ. Rosell sees this revival movement as including all the efforts to "reclaim the culture" (161; Carl F. H. Henry) and to renew the mind, the latter by holding Conferences for the Advancement of Evangelical Scholarship (197), starting Fuller Seminary (201), and Billy Graham's brainchild, *Christianity Today* (1955).

Rosell also argues that "reaching the world" was a signal part of this great Awakening movement and that Christianity has spread rapidly in the wake of such, particularly in the Southern hemisphere. He fails to make the case, however, that all this mid-century activity as part of an evangelical renewal movement is properly understood to be the basis of much of the Christianity that we now witness in much of Latin America and Africa. Some of that global Christianity is more liturgical than this (in the case of African Anglicanism) or more Pentecostal and charismatic, if not to say a kind of prosperity gospel, than the more standard evangelicalism represented by Ockenga, Graham, and company.

For all the flaws of evangelicalism, which have been talked about copiously elsewhere, it is the case that the best of evangelicalism may be seen in something like Rosell's account of the dying Ockenga. Elders from Park Street Church visited Ockenga in his waning days, seeking to offer comfort by reminding him of all that God had used him for in the advancement of the Kingdom. "None of the comments seemed to be bringing to him the sense of peace and comfort that the elders hoped they might be able to convey." Finally one elder said, "Well, Harold, I suggest that when you see the Master, just say 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" Rosell concludes: "Upon hearing those words, we are told, tears began to flow down the old pastor's cheeks as the deep comfort of God's promise began its work in his heart" (222-23). In an evangelicalism that has lost its way, we could do far worse than to cry to God for his mercy and to wait upon him in the means of grace for it.

—Alan D. Strange

David P. Scaer. *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics VIII*. St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2008. Pp. 238, including bibliography and indices. \$25.99

A good book is supposed to be like a good conversation partner with whom you enter a dialog and walk away enlightened. Yet at other times a

conversation partner can leave you extremely disappointed. Dr. David P. Scaer's book, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace* is one such disappointing book. *Law and Gospel* is the eighth volume in what is projected to be a thirteen volume series through the standard theological *loci* but using the Lutheran Book of Concord as the guide and the substance of explanation. This series, obviously, is aimed at the confessional Lutheran *ministerium*, that is, the theologians and pastors of the various Lutheran synods. As one volume in this series, the scope of Volume VIII are the *loci* of law and the gospel and the means of grace. Even the lay person with the most basic of understanding of his Lutheran neighbor's faith knows that these two *loci* are at the heart of confessional Lutheran theology, liturgy, and piety.

The first half of the book deals with law and gospel. In this section Scaer is both enlightening as well as disappointing. A few representative examples of each will illustrate this from this reader's perspective. First, Dr. Scaer opens with a wonderful paragraph that shows the different uses of the words "law" and "gospel" throughout the Holy Scriptures. He then moves on to show how these terms are used theologically in Lutheran dogmatics as well as how they have been confused throughout the history of the Christian Church. Yet after several enlightening pages dealing with examples of how these terms are used in Scripture, Scaer goes on to say, "Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians do not make these distinctions and claim to find the gospel and the law in each other" (8). On the contrary, sixteenth-century Reformed theologians such as Zacharius Ursinus, in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, and Theodore Beza, in his *The Christian Faith*, both distinguished the law from the gospel and made it a foundational principle of true theology. Even more disappointing than Scaer's claim, though, was his lack of evidence in the body or the footnotes of the book for this claim. This was not only a weak spot in this area of the book, but in dozens of other sections in which he reproduces what he understands the Reformed view to be on any given subject without so much as a citation. The conscientious reader is left thinking that even the best of Lutheran scholarship still continues to attribute to the Reformed positions the Reformed do not confess. It seems nothing has changed since the days of Calvinist and Lutheran polemic and diatribe in the sixteenth century.

A second enlightening area of Scaer's treatment of law and gospel is his dealing with various law and gospel statements in the Bible. In dealing with the issue of grammatical mood, he makes the extremely helpful point that the imperative mood in Scripture does not automatically make a command "law." Yet, once again, in this discussion Scaer goes on to say that the Reformed believer, along with the Wesleyan believer, "takes issue with Luther's view that even after conversion the Christian remains a sinner" (26). One again, this is certainly not the position the Reformed churches confess in their ecclesiastically adopted confessions. For example, in dealing with the doctrine of justification the Heidelberg Catechism uses the first person, speaking as a Christian, when it says, "Although my conscience accuse me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, have never kept any of them, and that I am still

prone always to all evil” (Q&A 60). Unlike my criticism above, to support his claim Scaer does give a footnote to this claim. Yet once again, the reader is frustrated as Scaer’s representative “Reformed” theologian is Donald Bloesch. The confessionally Reformed reader knows that Dr. Bloesch is a United Church of Christ minister and professor. In fact, what is frustrating is that Scaer returns again and again to Bloesch in his footnotes as a representative of the Reformed tradition.

In the second half of the book, dealing with the means of grace, Scaer opens up the Scriptures in an enlightening way as he explains how there were sacraments in the Old Testament such as the tree of life and others that Luther identified. He also speaks in a way that the Reformed believer can agree in a wonderful section where Scaer says, “Word and Sacrament’ is not merely a convenient cliché synonymous with the means of grace but is descriptive of what constitutes the church” (135).

Yet as with the first half of the book Scaer once again pulls out every scare tactic to demean the positions of the Reformed churches. He does so over and over again by stating what he says the Reformed position is on the means of grace without ever referencing its official catechisms and confessions. Like the first half of the book the disappointment deepens in that when Saer finally does give a footnote, more often than naught he references, among others, Karl Barth, G. R. Beasley-Murray, Stanley Grenz, Wayne Grudem, and Jan Rohls as his interlocutors. These are hardly the mainstream of confessional Reformed thought.

By now you can gather that in the end *Law and Gospel* is a mixed bag of insight and disappointment. The conclusion of this reviewer is that the Reformed Christian that wants to learn more about confessional Lutheranism’s teaching on the *loci* of law and gospel and the means of grace should turn to the time-tested Lutheran works instead of to Scaer’s book. To learn of the law and gospel distinction Scaer does not measure up to C. F. W. Walther’s classic, *The Proper Distinction Between the Law and the Gospel*. To learn of the doctrine of the means of grace, especially the Lord’s Supper, Scaer cannot match the “second Martin,” Martin Chemnitz’s work, *The Lord’s Supper*.

—Daniel R. Hyde

Herman J. Selderhuis. *John Calvin: A Pilgrim’s Life*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009. Pp. 287. \$25.00

In this year of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of John Calvin’s birth, I am reminded of the words of the preacher: “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccl. 12:12, ESV). The books and monographs that are being published on Calvin’s life, legacy, and theology represent something of a “cottage industry” whose fruits can scarcely be digested without some measure of weariness.

However, in the midst of the proliferation of new titles on Calvin, this new biography of Herman J. Selderhuis stands out as a gem. Selderhuis, who is a professor of church history and church polity at the Theological

University Apeldoorn and director of the University's Institute for Reformation Research, is well known as a scholar of the Reformation in general and of Calvin in particular. In his account of Calvin's life as a pilgrimage, Selderhuis exhibits a wealth of knowledge of the sources on Calvin's life and locates Calvin squarely within the setting of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

Since a number of excellent biographies of Calvin already exist, prospective readers of Selderhuis' biography might wonder whether he has anything to add to previous studies or what distinguishes this biography from some of its worthy predecessors. Previous biographies of Calvin range from the careful, meticulous accounts of T. H. L. Parker and Williston Walker, to the more impressionistic representations of Bernard Cottret and William J. Bouwsma. Selderhuis' biography finds its own unique place among these and other accounts of Calvin's life. In his introduction, Selderhuis explains his approach well: "In this book, Calvin is approached as neither friend nor enemy; I just do not categorize him in that sense. I feel nothing for Calvin either way, but I am fascinated by him as a person. Without intending to, he created a world-wide community of believers, arousing as much scorn as admiration and accomplishing so much in spite of his many limitations. I have tried to tell the story of his life to discover what he was like as a person. Since Calvin himself claimed that we learn most about people from their letters, the most important source for this book is his correspondence. Because I hope it will get us closer to Calvin himself, there are few references to secondary literature" (p. 7).

Though authors are not always the best interpreters of their own work, in this case Selderhuis gets it just right. His biography is not an instance of hagiography; he presents Calvin, to the extent this is possible, as the man he was with all of his strengths and weaknesses. Nor does Selderhuis give us another in a long series of accounts of Calvin's life that belong to the genre of what Basil Hall calls the "Calvin legend," the allegedly tyrannical dictator of Geneva and executioner of the heretic, Servetus. Selderhuis traces the life of Calvin under the broad theme of pilgrimage, and shows how Calvin found himself thrust into the work of reformation by God's unfathomable providence. And he does so largely through Calvin's voluminous correspondence or letters, which give a unique window into Calvin's life and labor.

In order to tell the story of Calvin's pilgrimage as a principal Reformer of the church in the sixteenth-century, Selderhuis divides his biography into ten chapters, each of which bears an identifying title. These chapters follow the outline of Calvin's life from his birth in Noyon, France, to his first stay in Geneva from 1536-38, his brief exile to Strasbourg from 1538-41, to his return and ministry in Geneva until his death in 1564. These chapters include the following: Orphan (1509-1533), Pilgrim (1533-1536), Stranger (1536-1538), Refugee (1538-1541), Preacher (1541-1546), Victim (1546-1549), Widower (1549-1551), Patient (1551-1554), Sailor (1555-1559), and Soldier (1559-1564). As these chapter headings illustrate, Selderhuis weaves his narrative in a way that stays

close to the theme of pilgrimage, and portrays Calvin as a flawed but deeply committed and influential reformer and teacher of the church.

Though I have not seen the original Dutch version of Selderhuis' biography, it should be noted that the translator, Albert Gootjes, has produced a text that has at once the characteristics of clarity, lively prose, and vivid description. As a result, in addition to its general excellence in telling the story of Calvin's life, this biography is one that should be easily accessible to the general reader.

I can only recommend this biography in the strongest terms. If you are looking for one new biography on Calvin to read, this should be your choice. There are other good choices, three of which I am also reviewing in this issue of the *Mid-America Journal of Theology*. But this one is simply the best.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Peter Toon. *Knowing God through the Liturgy*. Largo, FL: The Prayer Book Society Publishing Company, 1992. Pp. ii + 141. \$12.50

As Reformed Christians in the Continental and Puritan tradition, we typically do not have much interaction with reformation Christians in the Anglican tradition. This is not the case historically, though. One thinks of Calvin's letters and dedications to the Duke of Somerset, John Knox's interaction with Thomas Cranmer in the days of King Edward VI, Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli's days in Cambridge, and the letters of Heinrich Bullinger over ecclesiastical dress and whether ministers should conform or not, to understand that there was much dialog on issues of liturgy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As there was a cross-pollination of traditions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries so this needs to continue today. One of the most well-known Anglicans today, advocating "the traditional Anglican Way" is Peter Toon. In his book, *Knowing God through the Liturgy*, Toon writes polemically against the modern revisions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (hereafter, *BCP*) but also didactically, seeking to demonstrate that "a major purpose of Common Prayer is to enable believing sinners to know God in a personal way through corporate worship" (8). The implication of this is that "to begin to know Him now in corporate worship is to prepare to know Him in heaven in the Liturgy of the angels and saints" (8).

In chapter 2—*Liturgy Since Cranmer*, Toon contrasts the tradition of Common Prayer in the 1549/1552/1662 *BCP* of the Church of England and 1928/1962 *BCP* in America and Canada with the 1979 *BCP* and 1985 *Alternative Service Book*. The differences in the modern books are inclusive language and revision of key doctrines such as the Trinity, revisions of the ancient creeds (Rite II revised the Apostles' Creed to say, "He was conceived by the *power* of the Holy Spirit") and the Nicene Creed was revised to say, "We believe," not, "I believe."

Chapter 3—*What Knowing Is*, really gets to the heart of Toon's work. He begins with the analogy of how we speak of "knowing" someone, but then moves to God. We know him as a person, which means we know

about him but most especially that we have fellowship with him. But this God is not the god of deism, polytheism, and pantheism, nor the monotheistic god of Judaism and Islam. Instead, we know the one God who exists eternally as three persons. As Toon says, "There is much to know about God, for He is like a glorious, everlastingly inexhaustible Fountain from which we drink and continue to drink. He is super-essential Being and the more we know about Him the more we realize there is to know" (24). Toon goes on to say that we come to know God through meditating upon the Holy Scriptures, which are "the first source of our knowledge of God" (24). This is strengthened by the creeds, the Catechism, sermons, and the *BCP*. Here Toon explains the reason for his objection to the modern books of prayer that have changed the Nicene Creed from "I believe" to "We believe." While acknowledging the historical purpose of the plural "we," Toon says this lies at the heart of knowing God personally and confessing that in response to his revelation and grace (25).

Dr. Toon continues the theme of what it means to know God in chapter 4—*Covenant With God*. Here he reflects "upon the nature of the relationship we have with God" (27). He speaks of the divine initiative in God's covenant with man since it is not a contract between equals (27) but between the Creator and his creatures (28). In fact, the 1928/1962 *BCP* reinforces this in several Collects while the 1979 *BCP* destroys it, speaking of baptism as a covenant *we* make with God (29). Toon goes on to give a wonderful summary of the flow of the covenant of grace, speaking of its unilateral nature in establishment while its bilateral nature is seen in its practical effect (29). He summarizes this covenant in relation to its climax in Jesus Christ, saying, "Anyone who carefully reads the New Testament ... must see and understand that the relationship with God through faith and the agency of the Holy Spirit is genuinely personal and dynamic. It is a relationship which operates in both directions with the human movement to God through Jesus Christ being always dependent upon His primary movement through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit to His children. Within this covenant God calls His people into ever deepening fellowship, union and communion with Himself for He delights to be known by His redeemed creatures. Has he not made them in order that they might enjoy and love Him forever? Human knowing of God begins in personal and corporate prayer but it is extended from prayer into the whole of life, for God calls His people to walk with Him and to be aware everywhere and at all times of His presence with them" (31–32).

Toon goes on to explain masterfully that this covenant comes into reality for those who place their faith in Jesus Christ in what Paul calls "justification" (32–33), which leads to sanctification (33).

In chapters 5–9, Toon goes on to speak of the various services in the *BCP* and how they communicate to us this relationship with God. In the baptism service, "the truth that it is God who calls and brings people into covenant with Him and thus into His Kingdom and Church is most clearly acknowledged" and is expressed in prayer: "Almighty and everlasting God, heavenly Father, we give thee humble thanks that thou hast vouchsafed to call us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in thee: in-

crease this knowledge and confirm this faith in us evermore" (41). In commenting on the services of morning and evening prayer, Toon walks through the Reformation logic of these services, saying, "The daily services are for the covenant people of God, for those who walk by faith in faithfulness – or at least desire so to do" (50). These services "begin with a call from God through his minister to his people to engage in penitence, praise and thanksgiving, instruction from God through His Word and petitionary prayer" (50). Then "the covenant people of God must confess their sins, recognizing that in and of themselves they have nothing good to offer unto their gracious, faithful, covenant Lord who is the God of all mercy" (50). After the declaration of absolution, Toon states, "The rest of the service may be described as an expression of responsive faith. The faith which has responded to God's call and heard His promise of forgiveness and eternal life now speaks to God and hears from Him" (51). Toon concludes, saying, "The aim of all prayer is to know God.... To know God is to live in utter dependence upon His mercy and strength" (53, 54).

Toon devotes a chapter to the praying of the Psalter in which "the Church prays with and in Christ and which the individual Christian prays as a member of the Church, the Body of Christ" (62). Echoing the church fathers and John Calvin, Toon says of the Psalter: "Certainly in the 150 Psalms are mirrored the ideals of religious piety and communion with God, of sorrow for sin and the search for perfection, of walking unafraid in darkness by the lamp of faith: of obedience to the law of God, delight in the worship of God, fellowship with the friends of God, reverence for the word of God; of humility under the chastening rod, trust when evil triumphs and wickedness prospers, serenity in the midst of storm. It is not surprising that the psalms of praise and lament can so easily become the prayer of honest, believing people today—be that prayer for themselves or for others. The Psalms inform our minds, warm our hearts and direct our wills towards the knowledge of God. Yet, without denying this use of the Psalter, the logic of faith calls upon Christians to know a deeper level of experience—to pray each Psalm with, in and through Christ" (65–66).

On the service for Holy Communion, Toon speaks of our relationship with God, in particular in his description of the ancient *sursum corda*: "In the *Sursum Corda*, therefore, the forgiven, praising, covenant people of God lift up their hearts and give thanks as they are joined in the Holy Spirit to the heavenly choir who magnify and glorify the Name of the Lord our God. Faith is now expectant and the souls are ready to be fed by heavenly manna from the Table of the Lord. In the consecrated bread and wine, which is the sacramental body and blood of the Lord Jesus who died but is alive for evermore, God ministers to His covenant people by spiritually feeding them as they are in union with Himself in the Body of Christ with the gracious salvation which He has already proclaimed to them in the gospel words of assurance and mercy.... Having been nourished and having been allowed to enter into intimate knowing/communion with their Lord at His heavenly table, the covenant people of God then go forth into daily life to 'continue in that holy fellowship

and do all such good works as God has prepared for them to walk in.' Thus Liturgy is for life: knowing God is to be the basis of the daily vocation" (82).

To conclude, Toon's final chapter, 12—*God Is Love*, is a marvelous exposition of the biblical teaching as well as extrapolation of it from the BCP in its various services from baptism and confirmation, to the daily services of prayer, to Holy Communion, as well as the more personal services of visitation of the sick and burial of the dead.

Toon's work, *Knowing God through the Liturgy*, understands and applies the Reformed and biblical principle that liturgy is the structure through which we have fellowship with our covenant God. No doubt this is a result of his study and writing on the great Reformed and covenant theologian, John Owen (see *The Correspondence of John Owen (1616–1683): With an Account of His Life and Work*, ed. Peter Toon [Cambridge, James Clarke, 1970]; *The Oxford Orations of Dr. John Owen*, ed. Peter Toon [Callington: Gospel Communication, 1971]; *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen, Pastor, Educator, Theologian* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973]). Although Toon does not use the language that many in Reformed circles are accustomed to using, calling worship a "dialog," his writing expresses that in worship we meet with the Triune God who has condescended to us in Jesus Christ and become our redeemer to draw into his presence by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the essence of Toon's book. A Reformed minister's understanding of liturgy consisting as a covenantal/dialogical pattern would be supplemented tremendously by this Anglican work.

—Daniel R. Hyde

Machiel A. van den Berg. *Friends of Calvin*. Trans. Reinder Bruinsma. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xi + 266, including bibliography, illustrations, and an index of people and places. \$20.00

Machiel Van den Berg's book is not a biography of Calvin in the traditional sense of the word. As its title suggests, Van den Berg is interested in offering a portrait of Calvin by way of a treatment of a number of his closest friends and associates. Van den Berg, who serves as a pastor and preacher in the Netherlands, presents two dozen short biographies of friends of Calvin, some of whom later turned against him. Relying especially upon Calvin's correspondence, Van den Berg aims to give his reader a more intimate and direct account of Calvin's person as well as his reformatory work in Geneva than in more traditional biographies. Through the window of Calvin's interaction with various friends throughout the course of his life from his early childhood through his tenure in Geneva, Van den Berg offers a fascinating sketch of Calvin's life and proves the truth of the adage that "a person is known by his friends."

The friends of Calvin whom Van den Berg describes in his book range widely from boyhood friends, fellow-reformers, former teachers, to his relatives, including his wife, Idelette. In his colorful descriptions of Calvin's friendships, Van den Berg helpfully locates his subjects in their historical context and offers useful interpretations of their significant

place in Calvin's life and ministry. The joys and sorrows, the perplexities and dangers, of life as a Reformer in the sixteenth-century are clearly revealed.

The skeleton of Calvin's life, which is often all that the reader is given in more traditional biographies, is fleshed out by Van den Berg in rich and vivid vignettes of how Calvin's life intersected with significant people who played an important role in shaping his life as a believer, a pastor, a reformer, and author of a great number of significant theological writings. The reader is introduced to fellow Reformers of Calvin like Martin Bucer, his spiritual father in Strasbourg; William Farel, his most enduring friend; Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zürich whom Calvin befriended during his sojourn in Strasborg; Theodore Beza; and John Knox. The reader is also introduced to more obscure figures like his cousin Pierre Robert Olivétan, the first translator of the Bible into the French language; René de France, a member of the French royalty; Laurent de Normandie, the mayor of Noyon, the place of Calvin's birth; Pierre Viret, whom Van den Berg terms Calvin's "best friend of all"; and Idelette van Buren, his wife who labored at his side for a brief but "blissful" period in Calvin's life.

Though Calvin's person remains somewhat elusive even in Van den Berg's sketches of his friendships, the reader of this fine book will discover a confirmation of the truth of Richard Stauffer's book on *The Humanness of John Calvin* (1971). If Calvin were anything like the legendary figure of many popular portraits—an aloof and severe intellectual, who ruthlessly pursued his aims and harshly treated those who opposed him—it would be hard to imagine how he was able to establish and cultivate the kind of deep and lasting friendships with the diverse group of friends whom Van den Berg describes.

Though there are undoubted limitations to Van den Berg's approach to Calvin's life, readers of his book will catch a glimpse of Calvin's person in a unique way. Van den Berg's book provides readers with a fine and eminently readable story of Calvin's life and friendships.

—Cornelis P. Venema

J. van Genderen and W. H. Velema. *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*. Translated by Gerrit Bilkes and Ed. M. van der Maas. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008. Pp. xviii + 922. \$59.99 (cloth)

The translation of this nicely textured and biblically careful work in dogmatics is to be treasured and welcomed, and we commend the authors, translators, and the English publisher for making this work available to a larger reading public. The authors, J. van Genderen and W. H. Velema, come from the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands, which is most associated with the Free Reformed Churches in North America.

That this work, over 900 pages, is entitled a *concise* Reformed dogmatics might first appear to be an exercise in false modesty, but in fact

that adjective is aptly descriptive of its content when it is set next to, say, Herman Bavinck's four big volumes of dogmatics or G. C. Berkouwer's eighteen volumes of dogmatical studies (in Dutch), or the massive dogmatical works of Reformed theologians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In terms of total words, I calculate that it is about three quarters the length of Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, if his volume on prolegomena and revelation is included. Indeed, in reading this work the "concise" (*beknopte* in Dutch, meaning brief, succinct, compendious) or summary character of it is manifest inasmuch as the discussion of materials is wide enough, both in its scriptural exposition and historical interaction, as to make the reader realize that much is left unexplored and the authors intend to introduce a discussion and reach for the nub of issues, knowing that sometimes they are only scratching the surface. Thus the concision of this work accurately testifies to its contents, even as this concision also bespeaks this volume's introductory character which makes it a well-suited text for the classroom. As a compendium of contemporary (and principally Reformed) theological discussion this work is a fine achievement.

Not surprisingly, this Reformed dogmatics sounds a distinctly *Dutch accent*, which is not a negative as such, for in view of the more recent efforts in the field of dogmatics by Morton Smith, Robert L. Reymond, and the ongoing project of Douglas F. Kelly (all American and all Presbyterian), this work comes from the Netherlands, engages principally authors and controversies from the continental context, and therefore brings an added perspective to the North American and English speaking realm of dogmatic studies.

The principal writers cited, and with whom the authors interact, are Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck, Barth, H. Berkhof, Berkouwer, van Ruler, Schilder, as well as the Remonstrants, Roman Catholics, and a number of controversial writers in the Dutch context. The authors also engage Reformed confessional sources, chiefly the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort. Names like Moltmann, Pannenberg, Kuitert, and Schleiermacher also appear from time to time. North American writers are seldom mentioned, and the broader Reformed tradition is mostly ignored. The Church Fathers as a whole receive meager attention as well. But, again, this work is a compendium and introductory, and therefore offers itself as a textbook for students, a place to begin, orienting readers to the big world of dogmatic theology.

Inasmuch as this is a *Reformed* dogmatics, this work is directed at and focuses upon issues valued and defended by the Reformed community. Sometimes the polemical sections of this work zero in on the intramural debates within the Dutch Reformed academy. Moreover, this work is properly described as a *traditional* dogmatics. The sequence of arrangement and the presentation of materials will not surprise readers. As for the theological position staked out by the authors, readers will discover a sober and balanced stance relative to theological controversy. For example, on the question of humans being created in the image of God and what constitutes the divine image, the authors, after a fitting presen-

tation of the biblical materials pertaining to this issue, explore some “voices from history.” Here they set forth the views of Irenaeus, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, E. Brunner, K. Barth, and K. Schilder. The authors seek to sort out the good, the bad, and the ugly from the above mentioned writers, and in doing so they demonstrate, in this reviewer’s opinion, sound theological instincts.

This work shows itself to be *confessional* in its approach. It steers clear of novelty—especially contrived novelty—but it isn’t dusty either. It breathes a fresh character since it takes on contemporary theological problems and controversies. The discussion of creation and evolution is a case in point, wherein the various approaches and views are presented and the weaknesses or problematic features of these views are also examined. Those who champion a fundamentalist approach to this topic will be disappointed, but persons familiar with and respectful of the Reformed community’s engagement with this topic over the last 150 years will admire this volume’s temperate and moderate conclusions.

On the much debated topic of the covenant in the more recent history of the Dutch Reformed tradition the authors conclude, regarding the covenant of works, that there are “sufficient grounds for saying that the relationship between God and man is essentially a covenantal relationship.” Though the name covenant is not used to describe God’s relationship to man before the fall, it is not “a fabrication” to use that term, for “we merely trace and connect biblical lines.” The authors, however, prefer the phrase *covenant of life* to covenant of works. As for the covenant of grace and the controverted topic of membership within that covenant, the authors dislike calling Christ the head of the covenant of grace, but they acknowledge that we must distinguish between “an external manifestation or administration of the covenant” on the one hand and something internal on the other, for “the promises of the covenant and the seals of the covenant or sacraments, which confirm the promises, are in reality intended for the elect only.”

Of course, any reader of this work will have quibbles here and there. We all have certain ways we want a doctrine accented or emphasized or a particular threat or need or perceived problem addressed, etc. I certainly have mine. Nonetheless, I commend the authors for their balanced and sane analysis and presentation of issues.

This nicely bound and fine-looking volume will be a welcomed addition to any pastor’s library; pastors and interested laypersons of a confessional Reformed persuasion will be especially delighted.

—J. Mark Beach

H. van den Belt. *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust*. Studies in Reformed Theology. Vol. 17. Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2008. Pp. xiv + 384, including bibliography, index of names and of subjects. \$119.00

Among the fascinating features of this revised dissertation is its usefulness in resolving questions surrounding personal assurance of salva-

tion. At the heart of the assurance of salvation lies the relationship between truth and certainty, specifically, the trustworthiness of Scripture and the correlative testimony of the Holy Spirit.

The author grew up in the spiritual climate of the Dutch Secession churches, nurtured in an atmosphere of experimental knowledge of sin and grace. He is now pastor in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and assistant professor in systematic theology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. With this study, he received his doctorate in 2006 from Leiden University.

The author begins by mapping the lexical and linguistic territory belonging to the term *αὐτοπιστία* (*autopistia*), testing and savoring a range of possible translations before settling on the phrase “self-convincing character of Scripture.” The structure of the subsequent investigation emerges with the relationship of *αὐτοπιστία* to the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, to the authority of the church, and to the evidences for the trustworthiness of Scripture.

Two chapters are devoted to tracing the development of Calvin’s understanding of Scripture’s trustworthiness in the various editions of the *Institutes*. Van den Belt studies the occurrences of the word *αὐτοπιστία*, but more importantly, seeks to identify possible sources that Calvin may have used in forging his understanding. These chapters provide a probing analysis of the medieval background, the linguistic range, and the theological context for Calvin’s view, which may be summarized this way: *αὐτοπιστία* refers to “[t]he self-convincing character of Scripture as the written Word of God, which implies that believers find rest in it, not because of any external authority, but because of Scripture itself, through the witness of the Holy Spirit” (115).

We receive an impressive survey, in chapter four, of the role and understanding of *αὐτοπιστία* within Reformed orthodoxy. The thought of William Whitaker (1547-1595), Franciscus Junius (1545-1602), Francis Turretin (1623-1687), and Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) provide the reader with a very helpful portrait of doctrinal development in this period, a portrait carefully sketched in terms of continuities and discontinuities with respect to the trustworthiness of Scripture. Among the conclusions registered are these. The debate with the Counter-Reformation influenced the meaning and use of *αὐτοπιστία*, whereby it became formalized as an attribute of Scripture, and its treatment in the theological encyclopedia shifted from pneumatology and from the *locus* on Scripture to prolegomena. Turretin connected *αὐτοπιστία* to the text of Scripture, the *autographa*, such that the original manuscripts possessed certainty and reliability. The relationship between *autopistia* and *testimonium* came to be expressed in terms of *externum* and *internum*; the objective and external authority of Scripture was correlated with the subjective and internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. Each of these conclusions receives further analysis later in the study.

Chapters five and six provide a fascinating comparison of the views of Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921) and Herman Bavinck (1826-1909). Here as well, the author demonstrates thorough acquaintance with the issues and historical contexts of these theologians, and competently

sketches the contours of the function of *ἀποπιστία* in their respective theological systems. Warfield emphasized apostolicity as an essential mark of canonicity, an emphasis that recontextualized the objective authority of Scripture and the certainty of its trustworthiness. In his struggle against subjectivism and rationalism, Warfield appealed as well to the testimony of the church, not so much as the foundation of Scripture's authority as its essential corollary. The development of theological emphasis becomes clear. For Calvin, Scripture's *autopistia* and the rational demonstration of Scripture's trustworthiness exclude each other. For the Reformed orthodox, the *autopistia* of Scripture was a logical necessity. But for Warfield, the authority of Scripture must be proved logically, because faith in the authority of Scripture must be in accord with reason. His emphasis on *indicia* and evidences arises from his rejection of the liberal interpretation of the *testimonium* as a subjective and personal religious experience (e.g., Schleiermacher), in which the basis of trust shifts from Scripture to subjective experience. (Quite useful for North American readers, and relevant to the author's study, would have been interaction with the criticisms of Warfield's theory of textual criticism by the late Lutheran, Theodore P. Letis, "B. B. Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy and Biblical Criticism," in *American Presbyterians: Journal of Presbyterian History* 69 [1991]: 175-90; additional relevant insights are found in the collection of Letis essays, *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind* [Philadelphia/Edinburgh: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2000].)

The contrast between Warfield and his Dutch Reformed contemporary, Herman Bavinck, appears most clearly in their views of apologetics. Though warmly appreciative of his colleague's labors, Warfield nonetheless criticized Bavinck's view for allowing too little room for evidences of faith in theology. The heart of Bavinck's treatment of *ἀποπιστία* involves his doctrine of the *principia theologiae*, or principles of theology. These supply the structure for his theology, with the objective revelation of God constituting the *principium externum* and the faith-response to divine revelation forming the *principium internum*. Importantly for Bavinck, these *principia* function as a bridge between theology and science, and help answer the question of the certainty of faith. Moreover, they serve to prevent subjectivism while protecting a positive place for the subject in theology. In connection with Bavinck, Van den Belt offers a penetrating analysis of the incarnation/inspiration parallel in Bavinck's doctrine of Scripture, the witness-role of the church, and the object/subject relationship in human knowledge. In summary, whereas Calvin used the *ἀποπιστία* of Scripture as a confession, and Reformed orthodoxy viewed it as a logical necessity, while Warfield treated it as an evidentiary feature of Scripture, Bavinck understood the *autopistia* of Scripture as the objective counterpoint of the *testimonium internum*.

The crowning and most serviceable achievement of this work lies in the seventh and concluding chapter, "Trusting the Truth." For here the author applies the fruit of his study to Christian apologetics and faith in a postmodern context. In itself, such an application is hardly exceptional, but here the reader obtains a concise, clear exposition of the chief fea-

tures of postmodernism in contrast to modernism, and of those points of intersection—apologetic, pastoral, and missional—between the *ἀποπιστία* of Scripture and today's epistemological challenges. Postmodernism confronts the Christian church with a special challenge to its doctrine of Scripture. Its criticism of the rationalism of the Enlightenment has yielded skepticism about the possibility of objective knowledge. The autonomous ideologies of modernism are being replaced with autonomous individualism of postmodernism. Dichotomy gives way to holism, and situational micro-narratives are preferred to the meta-narratives that informed modernism's secular ideologies.

It is tempting to recite a number of remarkable insights from this concluding chapter, but we shall leave them for the reader's discovery and delight.

The publisher has produced an unusually fine volume, well-edited and well-bound. This study serves theologians and pastors well as a fine example of how to address religious needs of the present with the help of an accurately contextualized understanding of the development of dogma in the past.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Willem van 't Spijker, editor. *The Church's Book of Comfort*. Translated by Gerrit Bilkes. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009. Pp. x + 291. \$30.00 (cloth)

Anyone who loves the Heidelberg Catechism—especially pastors who regularly use this document in their labors within the church, both in teaching and preaching—will heartily welcome this recently translated volume by Reformation Heritage Books.

The book has seven fulsome chapters—the first offering a brief history of the reformation in Germany prior the emergence of the Heidelberg Catechism. The second chapter explains the writing and production of this document. Chapter three examines the persons involved in the production and propagation of this catechism, some of whom are often overlooked or otherwise unknown. The fourth chapter takes up the reformation theology of the catechism. Chapter five, significantly, explores and explains the recognition and use of the Heidelberg Catechism in the Netherlands—however first it examines the nature of catechism instruction in the late Middle Ages. Chapter six consists of a presentation of the catechism in preaching and teaching respectively. And the final chapter considers the continuing relevance of the Heidelberg Catechism, wherein a comparative study is made between the catechism and two other significant confessional documents in the ecclesiastical life of the Netherlands, namely the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. These seven chapters are divided among a variety of authors, each demonstrating competence in the materials treated.

The reader will find this handsome and sturdy volume to be well-illustrated—sprinkled with interesting portraits of important personages, facsimile pages, and sketches—even as the reader will find a significant

and useful bibliography of both primary and secondary sources. The editor of this book, Dr. Willem van 't Spijker, is Emeritus Professor of Church History and Canon Law at the Theological University of Apeldoorn, the Netherlands.

Students of the Heidelberg Catechism—pastors, scholars, and interested laypersons—will not want to pass up this highly recommended volume.

—J. Mark Beach

Cornelis P. Venema. *Children at the Lord's Table? Assessing the Case for Paedocommunion*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009. Pp. 198. \$25.00 (cloth)

Children at the Lord's Table? is a timely book. I was surprised and delighted by Venema's writings on paedocommunion when I first read them as a series in *The Outlook* magazine. The question to which Venema limits himself in this book is: "Does membership in the covenant, which is signified and sealed to the children of believing parents through their baptism, constitute a sufficient basis for admitting them to the Table of the Lord?" (4) I appreciated Venema's careful analysis of the statements of the church fathers on paedocommunion. The discussion of the relationship between the pilgrim Passover and the Lord's Supper is outstanding. Venema does not allow the issue of paedocommunion to be discussed in a vacuum. He brings the confessionally Reformed understanding of the relationship between Word and sacrament and the nature of the sacraments to bear on this issue. In a time when Presbyterian and Reformed churches are being swayed by winds of doctrine, this book represents a return to a rich biblical and confessional Reformed theology that enables one to see why paedocommunion ought to be rejected.

The book is well written. I appreciate Venema's irenic style. It is in the tradition of Herman Bavinck's style of writing polemical theology. Venema has a keen eye for overstatements and conclusions that go beyond the evidence. He self-consciously attempts to be fair and balanced. He writes things like: "The claim that all believers and their children already enjoy full participation in Christ, and ought therefore to be nourished in Christ at the Table of the Lord, is seen to be an *unwarranted exaggeration* of what covenant membership entails" (145). He interacts with supporters of Federal Vision who misinterpret the historical evidence for paedocommunion in the early church and who overstate the level of involvement of Jewish children in the pilgrim Passover.

Venema deals with the principal arguments of proponents for paedocommunion which are: (1) the historical argument, (2) the covenant argument, (3) the "analogy with the Passover" argument, and (4) the 1 Corinthian 11 argument.

Venema argues that proponents of paedocommunion have overstated the antiquity of paedocommunion in the early church. He concludes that "the practice of paedocommunion in the antiquity of the church does not compare to that for the practice of paedobaptism" (24). Venema carefully

discusses the church fathers on paedocommunion. He agrees that Augustine and other church fathers supported paedocommunion. But it was only after the third century that paedocommunion became more widespread in the Western and Eastern branches of the church. He traces the decline of paedocommunion in the medieval church and then looks at the position of the Reformers.

A strength of this book is that Venema approaches the issue of paedocommunion as a churchly theologian. He interacts with the subject from a biblical and confessional perspective. He makes the important point that the confessions of the Reformed churches embody a “tradition of scriptural interpretation” (27). Members of confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian churches need to value the rich and deep exegetical tradition that has been a gift of the Holy Spirit to the church. Venema shows a balanced and Reformed view of the confessions when he writes: “These confessions have an authority that is subordinate to Scripture, but they represent an acknowledged consensus regarding what the Scriptures teach” (27).

Venema shows that proponents of paedocommunion develop their view in isolation from the biblical and confessional view of the nature of the sacraments and especially the truth that the Lord’s Supper is the sacrament of nourishment. While the confessions teach that baptism is the “once-for-all sign and seal of incorporation into Christ and His church, the Lord’s Supper is a frequently administered sign and seal of the gospel that nourishes faith” (48). Venema also shows the close connection between Word and sacrament. One’s view of whether little children should partake of the sacraments cannot be developed in a vacuum. The fact that Christians are to partake of the sacrament with the “mouth of faith” has profound implications for who ought to partake. Venema’s conclusion is that the Reformed confessions “insist that the route from the baptismal font to the Lord’s Table can only be the way of an active response of faith” (48).

Chapter 4 on “The Old Testament Evidence Regarding the Participation of Children in Covenant Observances” is eye-opening. Paedocommunionists claim that the participation of children in the Passover meal proves that in the New Testament children should be allowed to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Venema argues that throughout most of the Old Testament children were not required to attend the pilgrim Passover in Jerusalem and that therefore as a rule the young children did not partake of the pilgrim Passover meal. He shows that in the intertestamental period only the “sons of the commandment” attended the pilgrim Passover with their fathers.

Venema also shows that it is wrong to think of the Passover supper as the only precedent for the Lord’s Supper. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He said, “For this is my blood of the new testament” (Matt. 26:28). This is a quotation from Exodus 24 where we read of a fellowship meal that was shared between Moses and the elders of Israel. Venema writes, “This means that the New Testament views the event recorded in Exodus 24 as one, if not *the most important*, of the Old Testament precedents for the Lord’s Supper” (64). Not all of the believers, and

certainly no children, participated in this meal, which pointed towards the covenant communion with God enjoyed in the Lord's Supper. Venema also makes an important hermeneutical point about how to interpret the New Covenant sacrament of the Lord's Supper: "Since the Lord's Supper marks the 'new testament in [Jesus'] blood' (Luke 22:20), it must be governed by the New Testament's teaching regarding the Lord's Supper" (60). One ought not to argue for paedocommunion "solely on the basis of Old Testament precedents" (60). Venema writes "we have no undisputed evidence of the participation of women and younger children in the pilgrim Passovers prior to the intertestamental period" (71). The fact that God did not require fathers to celebrate the pilgrim Passovers with their entire families was not a back-handed excommunication of the wives and children. Venema concludes that the analogy with the Passover, "though valid, can easily be overdrawn" (74).

Venema spends a bit of time on 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. At a critical point in this text, in verses 27-29, Venema argues that Paul is teaching a general point to the Corinthians about who may and should properly partake of the Lord's Supper. He argues that a shift from the second personal plural "you" in verses 17-22 to the third person singular in verses 27-29 shows that Paul is now giving "general instructions that apply to *all* members of the covenant community" (117). While this general teaching must be understood within the context of the problems in the church in Corinth, this general teaching is not limited to the specific context. "No competent interpreter of the passage denies the particular background that prompted Paul's instruction. The question remains whether Paul takes this occasion to provide more general instructions regarding the celebration of the sacrament by all believers whenever the sacrament is administered" (123). Venema correctly argues that the self-examination and the discerning of the Lord's body that Paul mentions are general instructions about how all Christians (who have reached the years of discretion) should approach the Lord's Supper. He argues that, within the context of 1 Corinthians 11, the "Lord's body" that is mentioned in verse 29, refers to the broken body of Jesus Christ and not to the church. Venema states "The normative understanding of these requirements in the Reformed churches is that the believer is expected to test the genuineness of his Christian profession before partaking of the sacrament" (124). He adds: "Furthermore, the 'discerning' of the body of Christ is not some kind of highly intellectualized exercise that exceeds the competence of many believers. It amounts to a simple recognition of the body of Christ that is signified in the sacramental elements of bread and wine" (124).

My sense is that for paedocommunionists the "covenant argument" is the fall-back argument. When pressed on other fronts, the mere fact that children are included in the covenant and church of God becomes the basis for supporting paedocommunion. Therefore Venema concludes by laying out the nature of the covenant relationship. He defends paedobaptism in an appendix. Venema concludes: "Christian churches do ... have an obligation to lead children, on the basis of the covenant promise that was signified and sealed to them in baptism, to the Table of the Lord. There is a direct pathway from the baptismal font to the Lord's Supper,

and it is the duty of the Christian church to exert itself in instructing the children of believing parents in the Christian faith so that they might follow this path" (14).

I cannot think of a better book on the subject of paedocommunion.

—Nathan Brummel

David F. Wells. *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Pp. xiv + 253. \$25.00 (cloth)

For the times are a-changin'. That is true not only on a larger cultural scale; it is true with respect to the North American Evangelical church. In this book, David F. Wells continues his analysis and critique of contemporary evangelicalism. Like its four predecessors, this volume is primarily concerned about the truth and about the loss of truth, the loss of a commitment to the truth of Scripture that continues to make inroads within the evangelical movement—a movement once upon a time defined by a robust passion to propagate and defend the truth contained in the Bible.

Wells challenges us to live as Protestants over against the innovations being promoted among many evangelicals today—innovations in the form of marketers and emergents. Against dubious new versions of the Christian faith, Wells calls us to courage to be Protestant, which for Wells is a call to adhere to historic Christianity, especially as defined by the Reformation. For Reformation Christianity prizes doctrine and champions truth in the face of error—both theological error and worldly error.

So what ails evangelicalism? As noted in his prior books, Wells argues that the doctrinal seriousness that once marked evangelicalism—dating back to *the fundamentals*—is being jettisoned in favor of a marketing approach to the church's life, message, and identity. The other dimension of this downward drift and ailment is exhibited in those who are loosely identified as emergent, whose accommodation to postmodern culture finds parallels with mainline liberal Protestants' accommodation to Enlightenment culture.

Wells divides his discussion into seven chapters. Chapter one gives us the lay of the evangelical land. Here we are introduced to the marketers and the emergents. Chapter two demonstrates how these sorts of evangelicals have made Christianity into something to be sold. They have slashed the prices of the gospel, but Wells argues that this is entirely misguided, which he expresses as giving the wrong result, from the wrong calculation, using the wrong analogy, and aimed at the wrong customer. Chapter three looks at truth-decay and argues for a Christian or biblical view of truth against the postmodern denial of it. Chapter four is about God and calls us back to ideas like law, sin, the cross, conquest, and obligation. Chapter five is about the self and what that means, how that is defined and worshiped in the postmodern setting. Chapter six takes up Christ, exploring visions of spirituality from below versus vi-

sions of spirituality in Christ from above. Here there is a passionate plea to get back to Christ alone and to preach this Christ. Chapter seven, the last chapter, is about the church. Wells expresses grave concern over the modern temptation to be “appealing” vis-à-vis the world, which mostly is achieved by a minimalist, simplistic reduction of the faith to easy-to-chew, bite-size morsels. This appeal-factor triumphs over depth, technique over truth, consumption over cost. In short, the seller (the church) triumphs over the product (the gospel). The surprising and sad part of all this is that it is an exercise in self-destruction; it constitutes a loss of the church itself, just like mainline Christianity met its demise in trying to appeal to modernism.

An interesting feature of the last chapter of Wells’s book is that he leaves room to respond to critics of his earlier books. Wells has been long on diagnosis and prognosis (i.e., the prognosis if no remedy is forthcoming) but short on prescription, i.e., Wells has been somewhat stingy in administering the needed medication. Wells admits that some of this criticism is valid. He also admits that he was mistaken in thinking that if he described the problems within the evangelical church many evangelicals would remember their past and return to the best part of that past for the obvious remedy. Indeed, the memory is fading fast.

The remedy Wells here proposes is grounded in a biblical portrait of the church. In this connection Wells demonstrates the importance of understanding the visible/invisible church distinction—what is revealed and manifest and what is hidden in this regard. Wells calls us to Christian—as in Christ—identity; he calls the church to be who and what it is. The nature of the church does not need to be rethought. Perhaps our life and performance as church needs ongoing evaluation and sanctification, but what the church essentially is may not be reduced to or misconstrued as or confused with its performance. As to its nature, the church is not our idea; it is not our creation; and it is not our business. And as to its nature, the Bible is very clear about the church.

Given this focus, it should come as no surprise that Wells calls the church to its biblical mandate and bids it to return to the proven means God established for it long ago, known as the three marks of the church: preaching, sacrament, and discipline. Wells bids us to trust in the Word as Word *of God*, adhering to its authority and believing its sufficiency. He bids us to patient and sober respect for the doctrines taught therein, to regard faithful preaching of the Word as the life-pulse of God’s speaking to us—all of which calls us to reaffirm the centrality of the pulpit. Wells reminds us that the sacraments really take us back to the gospel and to Christ. We neglect them to our ruin, for they remind us of Christ *alone*, by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*. Additionally, Wells calls us to practice Christian discipline as part of the church’s authenticity, despite its offensive character in our postmodern context. We must see God as holy and hold ourselves and each other to his holy standard. We must plug biblical content into words like sin, grace, and faith.

In issuing this summons, however, Wells is not blind to the fact that there is only one who builds the church—this ought to remind us afresh, too, about what the church is and what its ministry is. We are weak; but

there is one who is strong. We are captive but God is sovereign. We plant and we water; but God gives the increase. It is high time that the evangelical churches quit marketing themselves and start letting God be God over them. For the church is not a business to be run, nor an experiment to be tried out, nor a product to be sold. "It is," in Wells's words, "an outpost of the kingdom, a sign of things to come in Christ's sovereign rule, which is now hidden but will be made open and public." And then, Wells observes, "all the world will bow before him in recognition of who he is."

If there is a weakness in Wells's proposed remedy, in my assessment, it is that the author is perhaps too nostalgic, too impressed with the evangelical past, and therefore a bit short-sighted regarding the flaws and faults that smudge that past. We need to remember that Francis Schaeffer was an astute critic of evangelicalism before the ailments that Wells detects had set in. Schaeffer wrote a book, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, in which he argued that the colossal calamity afflicting these churches—churches called to bring the gospel to a secularizing, hostile world—is its own lack of love, love for Christ, love for one another, and love for the lost. Wells's proposed remedy is on-target so far as it goes, and is correct; but even with the right accent upon the Word of God, the pulpit, the sacraments, and the renewed implementation of church discipline—*formally* in place—we can still resist being disciples of Christ and turn a cold shoulder to the gospel and to the lost.

In any case, for those looking for a Reformed assessment of marketing approaches to Christian outreach and an appraisal of the emergent church, Wells's book is must reading.

—J. Mark Beach