

## BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

James D. Bratt and Ronald A. Wells, editors. *The Best of The Reformed Journal*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011. Pp. xviii + 325. \$20.00.

Students of the history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), and related Reformed denominations, will welcome the publication of this volume. Published as a commemorative volume in the centennial year of Eerdmans Publishing Company, the volume consists of a selection of representative essays from issues of *The Reformed Journal* throughout its forty-year run from 1951-1990. The essays are collected in three parts, which are chronologically ordered (Part I, 1951-1962; Part II, 1963-1977; and Part III, 1978-1990) and contain samplings on a wide range of themes by a number of the principal writers for the journal. To enhance the volume's usefulness, the editors have provided a general introduction to the historical occasion for and significance of the publication of *The Reformed Journal*. Since *The Reformed Journal* was published by Eerdmans throughout its history, the collection also includes an introductory note by the publisher, authored by Jon Pott.

The value of this volume lies in its contribution to an understanding of the recent history of the CRCNA. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, when *The Reformed Journal* was first published, tensions within the CRCNA were beginning to bubble to the surface. Perhaps this language is a bit too sanguine, since these tensions exploded in 1952 when almost the entire faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary were dismissed from their posts and a new faculty was appointed to replace them. Only a month after the initial publication of *The Reformed Journal*, another periodical emerged within the CRC community, *The Torch and Trumpet* (today: *The Outlook*). Within this volatile environment of debate regarding the understanding of the Reformed faith and theology, and the calling of Reformed believers in the contemporary world of public life and culture, *The Reformed Journal* championed for forty years what some have termed a "positive" or progressive voice. Though it would probably be too euphemistic to describe as a "conversation," the debates and controversies within the CRC throughout this period were echoed on the pages of *The Reformed Journal*. In terms of the present direction of the intellectual leadership of the CRC, the progressive voice of this journal would

prove to win the day in opposition to the more confessional and traditional voice of *The Torch and Trumpet* (known to readers of *The Reformed Journal* as “Glow and Blow”!).

In addition to its value as an important source for the study of this period in the history of the CRCNA, this volume is valuable as a sampling of some of the finest writing upon and rigorous engagement with a wide range of topics that characterized the period. When compared to the present state and level of engagement (biblically, confessionally, and theologically) with contemporary issues within the Reformed community, these essays will strike the reader as representing a higher level of discourse than is customary today. Though readers of a more confessionally Reformed persuasion will find some of the essays irritating, even symptomatic of the decline of biblical and confessional conviction within the CRC during this period, they should be impressed nonetheless by the vigor and high level of the conversation. They will also likely find themselves lamenting the loss of something desirable, a spirited and intelligent discussion of what it means to be a Reformed Christian today.

This is a book suited to be read in bits and pieces, and then to be savored for its bitter-sweet taste.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Michael Brown, *Christ and the Condition: The Covenant Theology of Samuel Petto (1624-1711)*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. Pp. x + 139. \$18.00.

The role of the Mosaic covenant in Reformed covenant theology has always been a difficult question. Members of the Westminster Assembly, such as Edmund Calamy and Samuel Bolton, even disagreed over how to classify the range of views among Reformed ministers. Michael Brown’s study on Samuel Petto contributes to the scholarly exploration of this question in the context of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. Brown is the pastor of Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, California. He argues that Petto’s view of the Mosaic covenant as a republication of the covenant of works was designed to safeguard the gospel. Although this work is generally well-researched, it lacks precision in discerning the range of seventeenth-century views of the Mosaic covenant. This reviewer hopes to clarify this subject by interacting with Brown’s treatment.

Petto was a Congregationalist and fifth Monarchist (15-18). Brown’s chapters set forth in order: Petto’s life and context, his covenant theology in general, Reformed orthodox views of the Mosaic covenant, Petto’s treatment of the Mosaic covenant, and the implications of his teaching for the doctrine of justification. Brown’s title is well-chosen since Petto’s primary contention was that Christ fulfilled all of the conditions of the covenant of grace, making it entirely uncondi-

tional to believers. Petto rejected the distinction between the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption and treated them as eternal and temporal aspects of the covenant of grace (27-33). He believed that this secured the unconditional character of the covenant of grace (111-115).

Petto's view of the Mosaic covenant is the centerpiece of his book on the covenants. This review will address Brown's historiography as well as the limitations of his assessment of Petto's work.

The book is characterized by some historiographical problems. Brown cites Richard Muller as arguing that the Reformed orthodox were "the legitimate and faithful heirs of Calvin" (5). Yet Muller notes, "Calvin's theology is referenced, not as a norm to be invoked for the examination of the later Reformed tradition, but as part of an antecedent complex of earlier Reformed formulations lying in the background of many aspects of the latter Reformed positions" (Richard A. Muller, "Diversity in the Reformed Tradition," Michael A.G. Haykin and Mark Jones, eds., *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth Century Reformed Orthodoxy*, Gottingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011, 12). Moreover, Brown defines Puritanism almost exclusively in terms of ecclesiology and makes no mention of piety or holiness as a central theme (9). However, in spite of the ambiguity surrounding the term, scholars almost universally recognize personal piety as a central element of Puritanism.

In addition, Brown treats an "eschatological goal" in the covenant of works as the standard Reformed position (36). However, he does not recognize the significant diversity among the Reformed orthodox regarding whether Adam's reward was heavenly or earthly life (see Mark Herzer, "Adam's Reward: Heaven or Earth?," *Drawn into Controversie*, 162-182). Later he mentions Petto's rejection of "monocovenantalist schemas" (39). This imports contemporary debates into historical theology. Brown gives no evidence that this terminology belonged to the seventeenth century, nor does he indicate who held such views. The Reformed orthodox would not have recognized this term in their debates.

At least two other items are worth noting. Brown attributes Petto's citation of "Dr. C" potentially to Edmund Calamy, but in the context of Petto's work, the reference is very likely to John Cameron's book on the covenants (13fn13). The reason for this is that Petto's views on the Mosaic covenant were most likely a variation of Cameron's assertion that the Mosaic covenant was a "subserving" covenant that was neither the covenant of works nor the covenant of grace. Additionally, he mentions that Petto's rejection of a distinct covenant of redemption fits better with the Westminster Confession than with the Savoy Declaration (30). However, even Savoy does not use the term "covenant of redemption." It refers only to a covenant between the Father and the Son (Savoy 8.1). Petto's position still fits this lan-

guage just as easily as those who distinguished the covenants of redemption and of grace. Conversely, though the terms describing the covenant of redemption were new at the time of the Westminster Assembly, there is no tension between this idea and Westminster's covenant theology.

This lack of precision with respect to the relevant issues in seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy affects Brown's treatment of the Mosaic covenant. While he succeeds in establishing the general thesis of his book, the manner in which he describes Petto's view of the Mosaic covenant in relation to the options available at the time is problematic.

To begin with, he notes that Petto "embraced both the old and new covenants, and qualified them as one covenant of grace..." (42). Yet this is directly opposed to Petto's argument in chapters six and seven of his work. Petto argued that the "old covenant" was not the covenant of grace, but that it was the "legal condition" of the covenant of grace as it was the covenant of works published for Christ to fulfill (Samuel Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, London, 1674, 112, 124, 127, 141, 186). Petto taught that the *Old Testament* saints were saved through the "one covenant of grace," but he denied emphatically that the *old covenant* was an administration of the covenant of grace.

Brown's treatment of John Owen is important, since Owen and Petto held similar views and Owen wrote a preface to Petto's work. Brown asserts, "[Owen] saw it as a covenant of works, distinct from yet subservient to the covenant of grace" (44). He later distinguishes Owen's view from Bolton (and Cameron), who regarded the Mosaic covenant as neither the covenant of works nor the covenant of grace (79). However, Mark Jones has demonstrated that Owen's position has many commonalities with Cameron's, even though he illustrates the nuanced differences between them (Jones, "The 'Old' Covenant," *Drawn into Controversie*, 199-202). Even though Owen believed that the substance of the covenant of works was republished at Sinai, he explicitly called Sinai "a superadded covenant" that was essentially neither the covenant of works nor the covenant of grace (Owen, *Works*, XXIII, 70, 77-78. Gould edition; see Petto, *The Difference*, 162). This is probably the most serious criticism of Brown's work, since it shifts the entire paradigm of understanding Owen and Petto's covenant theology.

Regarding Petto's view of the Mosaic covenant, Brown writes, "Petto believed Sinai to be a republication of the covenant of works" (87). This statement is not very precise. Petto wrote, "In general it was a covenant of works to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ, but not so as to Israel" (Petto, *The Difference*, 112). His point is that at Sinai the covenant of works was republished to Israel declaratively rather than covenantally (Jones, "The 'Old' Covenant," 200). In other words, it was not the covenant of works as originally given to Adam, but it was

the covenant of works as given to Christ as the second Adam (Petto, *The Difference*, 17). This is why Owen argued that Sinai contained the *substance* of the covenant of works without being the covenant of works stated simply. Brown has not adequately discerned the nuances of this position, which is admittedly subtle. He qualifies these statements later by noting that the law was not a covenant of works for Israel (95-96, 103), but the bald statement that the law was a republished covenant of works was one that neither Petto nor Owen was willing to make.

On a minor note, Brown misunderstands slightly Petto's view on "conditional promises" (41, 111-115). Petto believed that the gospel consists of unconditional promises to believers and that those promises which appeared to be conditional were merely rhetorical devices that were designed to incite faith (Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, 312ff). Brown does not bring out Petto's emphasis strongly enough. When Petto calls faith, repentance, and obedience conditions "improperly" speaking, he means that they are inappropriately called conditions, since they are merely duties within the covenant of grace (*The Difference*, 208).

The proper construction of Petto's covenant theology is as follows: The Sinai covenant was not the covenant of works as God gave it to Adam. Neither was it an administration of the covenant of grace to Israel. Nor was it a mixed covenant that was partly a covenant of works and partly a covenant of grace. Instead, it was a covenant of works for Christ in fulfilling the "legal condition" of the covenant of grace. As such, it was "an addition or appendix to that with Abraham" (Petto, *The Difference*, 162). Israel had no relation either to the covenant of works or to the covenant of grace by virtue of the Mosaic covenant. This covenant brought them temporal blessings in the land of Canaan only (as Brown notices, 96). Brown gives the impression that Petto taught that the Mosaic covenant was not an administration of the covenant of grace, but that it was a republication of the covenant of works. Yet, strictly speaking, Petto believed that it was neither.

Seventeenth-century debates over the Mosaic covenant differ widely from modern ones. Some believed that the Mosaic covenant was the covenant of grace. Most believed that it was the covenant of grace with a republication of the covenant of works as a subordinate element. A small number taught that it was neither the covenant of works nor the covenant of grace, but that it contained elements of them both. Few, if any, believed that the Mosaic covenant was merely the covenant of works. Brown's work draws necessary attention to a virtually forgotten thinker in the seventeenth century, but the conclusions of this work need to be sharpened in order to better contribute to contemporary discussions.

—Ryan M. McGraw

Eberhard Busch. *Drawn to Freedom: Christian Faith Today in Conversation with the Heidelberg Catechism*. Translated by William H. Radner. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010. Pp. xiii + 363. \$32.00.

Coming from one of the more renowned theologians in the world today, *Drawn to Freedom* is an engaging treatment of the Heidelberg Catechism, demonstrating how this classic Reformation catechism speaks with insight, relevance, and wisdom to the church of the twenty-first century. Eberhard Busch, perhaps best known to English-speaking readers as the author of a distinguished biography of Karl Barth as well as an analytical volume on Barth's theology, presents the wisdom of the Heidelberg Catechism while engaging contemporary theological trends, issues, and problems. He explores the true freedom of the gospel and the life-and-death comfort it seals to believers. Along the way, the individual believer's questions, concerns, and trials—and social issues too—are folded into the commentary so that Busch's book is no stale presentation of the predictable. Rather, readers will find in this book a higher level of theological comment than some other English sources currently available on the Heidelberg Catechism.

Busch, professor emeritus of Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen, introduces this book by inquiring into the nature of the theological task. In short form, he maintains that (1) "The object of Christian theology is the gospel: that is, a message which is spoken to me, and which I cannot tell myself." (2) "It is indispensable for Christian theology that it is oriented to holy scripture and that it is formed through scripture's witness." (3) "Christian theology is connected to the Christian church"—meaning, "we in Christian theology cannot ignore that we are members of the Christian church and therefore do not do theology as neutral observers." (4) "Theology is also an activity in which I myself am always called to *accountability*." Ultimately, I am accountable to God. (5) "Finally, theology is an incomplete activity."

What follows next is a cogent introduction to the catechism itself, treating its composition, character, function, the opposition it elicited, and its dissemination. Then Busch considers the basic theme of the catechism. Concerning the first Q/A (Busch refers to all the Q/As as Articles), the author observes that this is not an "anthropological starting point," but "a summary of the whole" catechism, so that "all which follows just develops and expounds what is already said in Article 1." The trinitarian structure of the Heidelberg Catechism is also treated appropriately.

Busch's commentary reveals a thorough knowledge of the catechism in all its parts, and he effectively interprets this document by noting how various Q/As qualify and help to explain one another. In doing this, Busch also draws on Scripture in order to illustrate or

elucidate a particular theological issue. For example, in treating good works Busch takes us to the “rich young man” (Matt. 19:16ff.), who confessed that he had kept all the commandments from his youth. Observes Busch: “Jesus does not say: well, at some time or other you too have lied or stolen and so have not entirely fulfilled God’s commandments. Much less does he teach the man abstractly about an inability to keep the commandments. But Jesus says to him that he has understood God’s commandments *wrongly* and kept them *amiss*, and *therefore* says to him: sell all your goods! Jesus does not thereby give him an eleventh commandment, but rather uncovers the meaning of all Ten Commandments.”

Besides name and subject indices, this book also includes a beneficial Scripture index. Pastors who regularly preach through the Heidelberg Catechism will find fresh insights in this book, which is also sure to deepen their knowledge of and appreciation for this time-tested instruction manual and confession of the Reformed churches.

—J. Mark Beach

D. A. Carson. *The Intolerance of Tolerance*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012. Pp. x + 186. \$24.00 (cloth).

The title of this recent book by D. A. Carson captures well its main burden or thesis: the virtue of tolerance, which is a cardinal virtue in contemporary western society and culture, has transmuted into a new form of intolerance. Whereas an older, appropriate understanding of tolerance meant to permit the co-existence in society and culture of different religious commitments and world-views, the new view of tolerance insists that all views must be regarded as co-equal. The newer doctrine of tolerance requires that everyone regard the views of others to be at least as true as their own. Or, to state it differently, the newer view of tolerance refuses to grant anyone permission to believe that his or her conviction is true in a way that others (even those opposed to it) are not.

Carson states his thesis nicely in the introduction: “Intolerance is no longer a refusal to allow contrary opinions to say their piece in public, but must be understood to be any questioning or contradicting the view that all opinions are equal in value, that all worldviews have equal worth, that all stances are equally valid. To question such postmodern axioms is by definition intolerant. For such questioning there is no tolerance whatsoever, for it is classed as intolerance and must therefore be condemned. It has become the supreme vice” (12).

In the preface to his book, Carson notes that it originated in a lecture that he gave on a number of occasions at several universities and colleges. When the lecture was advertised, large crowds often turned out, illustrating the timeliness and interest of the topic. Car-

son also observes that further stimulus was given to his reflection on the topic by his work on another book, *Christ and Culture*. One of the challenges facing the Christian in contemporary society and culture is the post-modernist prejudice against the idea of values or truths that can even be approximated by appeal to a recognized authority or apprehended by some acknowledged process of reflection. The “plausibility structure” of contemporary culture is one that has little place for truth, and even less for those who claim to have apprehended it in some measure. His aim in writing the book is to address this cultural phenomenon and examine the implications it has for Christian witness in the world.

After an introductory chapter, which introduces the focus of his study, Carson describes the nature of the problem in chapter 2 and the history of the idea of tolerance in chapter 3. In the central chapters of his book, Carson then offers an assessment of the modern doctrine of tolerance and its unhappy implications for the church and Christian truth claims. In the final chapter, entitled: “Ways Ahead: Ten Words,” Carson gives ten encouragements, ranging from the pragmatic to the foundational, to readers in their efforts to combat the intolerance of the modern idea of tolerance. To whett the reader of this review’s appetite for reading Carson’s book, his encouragements are: “expose the new tolerance’s moral and epistemological bankruptcy”; “preserve a place for truth”; “expose the new tolerance’s condescending arrogance”; “insist that the new tolerance is not ‘progress’”; “distinguish between empirical diversity and the inherent goodness of all diversity”; “challenge secularism’s ostensible neutrality and superiority”; “practice and encourage civility”; “evangelize”; “be prepared to suffer”; and “delight in and trust God.”

This is a book worthy to be read and digested. Carson writes well, thinks deeply, and offers wise counsel. Highly recommended!

—Cornelis P. Venema

Oliver D. Crisp. *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2010. Pp. xiv + 209. \$22.00.

Oliver D. Crisp, reader in theology at the University of Bristol and visiting lecturer at Regent College in Vancouver, has produced a book that might simply be called *Studies in Theology*—that is, they are essays (as the subtitle aptly informs us) in Reformed theology. Crisp’s goal, however, is to *retrieve* doctrine, as the title tells us. That is, the book seeks to present well-informed analysis to the topics handled, and in so doing bring the ideas of earlier generations of Reformed thinkers to “the table of contemporary theological reflection.”

These well-written and penetrating essays serve as a model of polite engagement with tradition and fair-minded, as well as illuminat-

ing, analysis of vital themes in theology. As such, this book is a refreshing examination of an array of traditional theological topics, investigating the contributions of a number of celebrated Reformed writers, spanning from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, and employing an analytical method in order to offer insights relevant to current discussions in theology. In doing this, Crisp is busy with constructive theology, aiming to help the church by clearing away muddled and messy thinking.

Because Crisp is judicious in his interactions with other authors, one wishes to be judicious in assessing the success of his essays. Those essays are divided into three parts: creation and providence, sin and salvation, and the Christian life. In the Preface to the book, the author offers a fine summary of the presentations ahead. The first two chapters comprise part one. Here Crisp first takes us to John Calvin's doctrine of creation and providence, with the aim of showing how Calvin's views offer insight for current debates about these topics. Chapter two clarifies how Karl Barth engaged the Reformed tradition in his doctrine of creation. While Crisp is not entirely won over to all the features of Barth's doctrine, he does argue that there is much in Barth's presentation that theologians today can usefully engage.

The next section of the book, part two, begins by examining Jonathan Edwards' doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, wherein Crisp rightly notes that Edwards attempts a revised ontology of the occasionalist variety, in order to forge a stronger argument in support of the traditional doctrine. Chapter three examines Francis Turretin's discussion of the necessity of the Incarnation. Here Crisp argues that Turretin's doctrine needs some revision in order to be entirely consistent. Chapter four considers John McLeod Campbell, a nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterian minister who lost his charge for his novel views of the atonement. Crisp wages an argument that the internal logic of McLeod Campbell's view does not require the revision to the doctrine of God that he proposed. The next chapter, which closes out this part of the book, examines Karl Barth's denial of universalism. Barth is often charged with universalism. The theological debate over this denial has continued for some time, for either Barth's theology requires a species of necessary universalism, or his theology suffers a certain incoherence or inner tension, if not outright contradiction. Crisp opts, rightly I think, that the latter better describes Barth's theological effort.

The third part of this volume brings readers back to John Calvin. This time the topic is his doctrine of impetration or petitionary prayer. Is it pointless to petition God, given the divine decree? Crisp offers a defense of impetration. This chapter is followed by the doctrine of the church as expounded by John Williamson Nevin, the nineteenth-century Mercersburg theologian. Crisp contends that Nevin's doctrine is supplemented with an organic understanding of the church, char-

acteristic of Romanticism, but that does not make it unreformed; on the contrary, there is much to commend it for modern theology. Section three closes out with a chapter devoted to Jonathan Edwards' view regarding qualifications for communion. Crisp demonstrates how Edwards revised his position toward a stricter set of qualifications. Crisp maintains that the revision was borne of Edwards' views of the church, which followed a robust organic model. It turns out, says Crisp, that Edwards' position was not "draconian"; instead, it reveals itself to be part of the tapestry of his "eschatological vision of the nature and purpose of the Church and the plan of God." Crisp believes that Edwards' revised position on the qualifications for communion ought to give contemporary Reformed theologians pause whether "their own ecclesiology is 'high' enough."

Crisp is an engaging author, smart, and attuned to both the church and the academy. Although I do not agree entirely with all of his conclusions, I have benefited from these essays in Reformed theology. I will also be turning to them again in my own exploration of these theological themes.

—J. Mark Beach

Dean B. Deppe. *All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011. Pp. xvi + 398. \$25.00; \$15 Kindle®

I do not have enough fingers or toes to count the number of times I have heard a preacher declare, "I did a word study on this." A little older (certainly) and a little wiser (hopefully) than when I first heard this banal quip, I now tune the speaker out until he returns to something substantial. One hopes he will. I have two reasons for this. The first is this: abstract words do not mean anything. In and of themselves words are just sounds in the air and scribbles on a page. It is only when they are placed in a context that they mean something. Placed in an historical context "cheerio" means either good-bye (England) or a single morsel of breakfast cereal (America). Placed in a literary context "flesh" can mean human (John) or the once-dominant redemptive-historical epoch into which the new age has already broken with Jesus' resurrection (Paul). Therefore, I am not interested in a "word study" until the preacher returns to the biblical text and explicates what *all the words* mean *together*. My second reason is because, in reaction to the aforementioned slogan, a little voice awakes in my head. It says, "No you didn't! You didn't do a *word study*; you looked it up in a dictionary—maybe even multiple dictionaries—or you looked it up in a concordance and compared a few otherwise-unrelated verses. You'd have made a good Pharisee with such mid-rashic leapfrogging. True word studies take weeks (sometimes months), demand a very high proficiency in original languages and

require access to countless primary texts.” Or, when I am feeling really cynical (usually because something else in the sermon has irritated me), the voice simply says, “No you didn’t! You ran your mouse over a word and a break-out-box appeared giving you either a definition from a (most likely obsolete, no less than 75-year old) lexicon or a bunch of verses in a (surely incomplete) list.”

Both of these concerns are what make *All Roads Lead to the Text* a potentially fruitful book. Many Bible software users do not know how to make the most of such a tool. But Deppe’s hermeneutics book sets as its goal to “demonstrate how the use of Logos Bible Software can be employed to facilitate our study of the text” (xiii). Throughout the book the efficient use of Logos is illustrated at several turns in the exegetical processes, not merely for the short-cut parsing and definition options. Logos users will, therefore, find helpful tips to get the most out of their software.

The macrostructure of the book itself addresses my other concern. Eight chapters successively lay out exegetical procedures to systematically navigate the various layers of context in which any passage must be considered. These can be summarized as the literary context, historical context, and theological context. Space is also given to application. These steps are nothing new. The value in Deppe’s book, however, is the way he teaches these methods through examples. Only brief space is given to procedures, and the vast quantity of the book is then devoted to showing specifically how such procedures function when interpreting specific texts. The hermeneutics teacher will, therefore, find a plethora of illustrative examples to help students appreciate the careful attention each of these layers of context deserves. Appendices of literary techniques and grammatical terms are also very helpful.

Despite these two strengths, this reviewer still has some questions. First, insofar as the target audience seems to be English Bible readers, it is unclear why so much attention is given to interpreting *Greek* and *Hebrew* texts. Can an English Bible reader really get anything out of Bible software that parses verbs and identifies agreeing nouns, etc.? To deal proficiently (and competently) with the Bible’s original languages the exegete needs to understand their conceptual structures. This can only be learned by drawn-out study and years of experience. Would that it were otherwise; but so it is. The use of such software by English Bible readers to pull some treasure from the original languages can only result in the illusion of discovery. Would it not be better to encourage English Bible readers to compare translations as the best window for peering into the original (to be sure, an approach Deppe does commend, 75–84) and to rely on commentators (another step Deppe includes, 194–212), and leave it at that?

My second question is not so much aimed at the book (for no book can do everything), but an issue readers will want to ponder. How determinative for a complete interpretation is the redemptive-

historical context of any passage? I think very. There is just no underestimating the robust canonical knowledge NT writers assume of their readers. Therefore, I heartily agree with Deppe where he emphasizes the unity of the Bible and its Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation structure (249–58). He says it well on pages 250: “each concept in Scripture ... needs to be investigated through the lens of these four organizing principles in the history of redemption.” This is an oft-overlooked consideration in many hermeneutic books. I therefore applaud Deppe for its inclusion. That said, of all the hermeneutical hoops through which an exegete must jump, I think this is the hardest one to negotiate skillfully. It requires seeing the metanarrative of the entire Bible and how the diverse parts contribute to the unified whole. And, I would argue, it requires deft insight into how any passage specifically relates to the ultimate revelation of God in the gospel of his Son (cf. Luke 24:25–27; 44–48; Acts 2:17–36; 3:11–26; 4:9–12; 13:16–41; Rom 1:1–7; 3:21–26; 5:14–21; 16:25–27; 1 Cor 15:1–4; 2 Cor 1:20; 3:12–18; Gal 3:6–9, 16, 29; Eph 1:7–10; 2:19–3:12; Heb 1:1–4; 1 Pet 1:10–12). By this I mean that every passage of the Bible is *Christological*; every passage at least leans conceptually toward the gospel if it does not teach it explicitly even through types and prophecies. As mentioned, no one book can do it all, so it is no critique that Deppe does not (cannot) devote more space to this important layer of context. Let me recommend, therefore, some other works that could help the reader further in this field: Graeme Goldsworthy’s *Gospel and Kingdom* and Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton’s *Let the Reader Understand*. Both of these works would supplement any student’s pursuit of a faithful hermeneutic.

These questions notwithstanding, Deppe’s *All Roads Lead to the Text* should prove helpful to the above-mentioned readers.

—Nicholas G. Piotrowski

Kevin DeYoung. *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism*. Foreword by Jerry Bridges. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010. Pp. 253. \$14.99.

Kevin DeYoung is an entertaining author to read; and this book makes entertaining reading. Happily, this book is also full of practical insight for communicating the good news of the Heidelberg Catechism to modern North Americans—that is, he conveys the good news (the gospel) as explained by the Heidelberg Catechism. Says DeYoung, “The only thing more difficult than finding the truth is not losing it.” Thus he gives this book the title *The Good News We Almost Forgot*. Sadly, a document like the Heidelberg Catechism has become (at least for many persons raised up in the family of Reformed churches) a dead document. It is not so much disputed or misappre-

hended or superseded as ignored—banished to the dustbins of old writings. It has suffered an exile from many Reformed churches, regarded as old-fashioned and irrelevant. But along comes Kevin DeYoung, senior pastor of University Reformed Church (RCA) in East Lansing, Michigan, urging the church to lift the ban on this document. He wants to bring it home from exile, for here we discover the old, old story—and that story is neither old-fashioned nor irrelevant.

But why have so many people who grew up with the creeds come to dislike them? “Perhaps it’s because,” notes DeYoung, “truth is like the tip of your nose—it’s hardest to see when it’s right in front of you” (13). DeYoung, who grew up learning the catechism in church, knows that some people, who have had no exposure to the catechism, might be intrigued by this ancient document, while others will regard “catechism” as Roman Catholic, and still others—“the hardest soil of all”—want nothing to do with it. “Been there, done that.” *Dull, dull, dull!* Besides, the protest sounds, having your head packed full of doctrine doesn’t necessarily transform into Christ-like love and life.

Whatever the response might be to being introduced to the Heidelberg Catechism, DeYoung bids us, “Come and see.” He tells us that he loves the Heidelberg Catechism because “it’s old, it’s biblical, and it’s true” (14).

This book, after its introductory chapter, expounds the catechism by following each Lord’s Day. Thus the book comprises fifty-two chapters, followed by an Epilogue, “The Crust and the Core,” and an Appendix entitled, “Does the Heidelberg Catechism Forbid Homosexual Behavior?”

I will offer one tidbit of DeYoung’s practical exposition to give readers a taste of the whole. In Lord’s day 44 (which treats the Tenth Commandment), DeYoung first takes readers to the words of Exodus 20:17 itself, interspersed with imaginary reactions we might have to its prohibition. For example: In response to the phrase, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife,” we might be thinking: “*Why did I marry my wife? That other wife over there is always so friendly, and her kids are perfect and their house is always immaculate. Why couldn’t my wife have aged like that? I wish I could be married to someone like her.*” In tandem with the words, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s male servant, his female servant, his ox, or his donkey,” we might be thinking, “*It’s not fair. All the other families go on great vacations. They go to Disney World. They go see the Grand Canyon. Some of them get to travel Europe or go on cruises. We just go to Grandma’s house or the county fair. I ought to be able to take those vacations just like everybody else*” (207). From here DeYoung offers a formal exposition of the sin of coveting, taking readers to the relevant biblical materials. He distinguishes coveting from desire. Says DeYoung, “Coveting is a violation of the second Great Commandment.” Coveting also expresses discontentment, and this relates to the first Great Commandment. “Contentment and covetousness are

opposites.” For contentment finds happiness in the Lord and in his provision; but covetousness is sour and jaundiced, so that happiness cannot be had until God gives us what we want!

Last, DeYoung takes up in too few words the last two Q/As of this Lord’s Day: Can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly? And, Why does God want these commandments preached so pointedly? Indeed, if I have one clear criticism of this book it is that the exposition is too truncated and condensed. The adage “*Less is more*” is often true. In this case, though, a bit more would be better.

I am glad DeYoung has written this book, and I hope it finds many readers. There are superior books to DeYoung’s in expositing *The Heidelberg Catechism*. But DeYoung’s volume excels in winsome presentation and relevant application. If, through the years, the catechism has suffered at the hands of inept teachers and uninspired preachers, DeYoung is at least one remedy. He does an excellent job dispelling the jibe: “Doctrine is dull.” He also serves as a model of teaching the wonderful truth of the gospel through this time-tested document. Heartily recommended!

—J. Mark Beach

Ross Douthat. *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics*. New York: Free Press, 2012. Pp. 352. \$26.00 (cloth).

That there is something wrong with America is widely held. A variety of pundits, philosophers, and preachers can point to symptoms like declining literacy rates, disastrous economic indicators, high divorce rates, etc. Diagnosing the problem accurately and prescribing the right treatment is another thing altogether: secularists of the left differ with those of the right and Christians differ among themselves as to what exactly it is that ails the body politic and how we ought to go about addressing and solving it. In the last few decades, streams of books seeking to answer those questions have poured forth from the press.

Ross Douthat, a *New York Times* op-ed columnist, who also writes for, among other things, *National Review* (establishing his credentials as a putative conservative intellectual), gives us the latest *what’s wrong with us and what can we do about it* book. Since Douthat is not a secularist, some of what he finds to be symptoms of decline, some secularists may find not troubling: abortion, gay marriage, and other moral ills. But what concerns theists or Christians may also concern secularists: unwanted pregnancies, corporate greed and governmental waste are concerns for all in the wider society. Douthat, a Catholic convert, is concerned about all these “symptoms.” As to diagnosis of our disease, Douthat argues that we are not afflicted, as is often claimed by those who lament widespread secu-

larization, with a lack of religion or spirituality. We have a surfeit of religion, contra the prediction of Jefferson in the nineteenth century that revealed religion would wither and Harvey Cox in the twentieth that secularism would come to dominate. The earlier nineteenth century, ingeniously tagged by Jon Butler as “antebellum spiritual hot-house,” had its Joseph Smiths, just like the twentieth has had its “New Age spirituality,” all of which is a heretical departure from orthodoxy. The predicted demise of religion proved premature; the religion that flourished, however, was “bad,” heterodox, heretical.

The nineteenth and earlier twentieth century, nevertheless, Douthat asserts, saw the growth of heresies on these shores only in combination with a growth of evangelical and Catholic faiths. In more recent decades, however, Douthat laments, the flourishing of heresy has not been offset by the growth of orthodoxy. To put it another way, we’ve always had our heresies here in America: it’s not that we’ve become irreligious lately; it’s that heresy is outstripping orthodoxy and many once sound enclaves of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism have themselves given way to the trend. Yes, folk are still religious but more and more they are religious heretics, not orthodox Christians. This is the burden of Douthat’s argument.

Before launching his jeremiad with respect to what went wrong, Douthat seeks to show us that not long ago the mainline Protestant and Catholic churches were sought out and adhered to, instead of the heretical “spiritualistic” teaching of Oprah or the prosperity message of Osteen. Thus Douthat starts his story on the period leading up to the Second World War, noting the conversion of prominent literary figures like W. H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis and others. After examining a laundry list of prominent and influential figures from Karl Barth to John Courtenay Murray, Douthat settles on four American figures of the War years to the mid-1960s, men who to him stood for something and who had beliefs rooted in Christian orthodoxy: the neo-orthodox theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the evangelist Billy Graham, the moral lecturer and religious teacher Bishop Fulton Sheen, and the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.

Douthat argues that these men were not without their problems and that the seeds of heresy that would blossom to destroy orthodoxy were already germinating. Nonetheless, Douthat contends, Niebuhr, Graham, Sheen, and King, and the movements they represented, were not marginalized in their time. They were engaging the mainstream, confident, not retreating. Douthat concludes with respect to this: “For a fleeting historical moment, it seemed as though the Christian churches might not have to choose between becoming religious hermit kingdoms or the spiritual equivalents of Vichy France. Instead, they might become something more like what the Gospels suggested they should be: the salt of the earth, a light to the nations, and a place where even modern man could find a home” (54).

Many things made the promise of the future bright: Kennedy's election, King's "I Have a Dream" speech, churches continued to grow and exponential growth was predicted and anticipated. And then, Douthat writes, "These hopes soon turned to ashes. The Protestant Mainline's membership stopped growing abruptly in the mid-1960s and then just as swiftly plunged" (59). Douthat continues with statistics evidencing decline in the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church, the Episcopalian Church, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), beginning in the mid- to late-1960s and continuing to the present. In the Roman Catholic Church the decline was seen in weekly mass attendance, a shortage of priests, a downturn in giving, Catholic school enrollment and in other areas, though Latino immigration held the absolute numbers steady for some time. Douthat's complaint is that support for mainline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism has plummeted over the years, though support for a less orthodox religiosity or a vague spirituality has increased.

Douthat examines and dismisses some theories as to what caused this decline, one being that the supposed orthodoxy of the previous years was hollow and could not withstand a significant secular challenge. Douthat posits five possible reasons for the decline of orthodoxy: political polarization, particularly over Vietnam (65); the sexual revolution and the turning away from historic Christian moral standards (70); a developing global perspective, including a turning from the Western/Christian perspective to one more open to Hinduism, Buddhism, and the like (73); the religious consequences of America's ever-growing wealth and an unwillingness to engage that from a historic Christian perspective (78); and a growing egalitarianism that rejects all having to do with class and class status, with orthodoxy identified with class, the East Coast Establishment and the like (81). Thus societal shifts of various sorts, beginning in the later part of the Johnson administration, rendered orthodoxy unwelcome to many, who turned to unorthodox churches or to alternative forms of spirituality.

The response to the decline of orthodox beliefs on the part of the mainline and Roman Catholic Churches has been either accommodation or resistance. The former is reflected by the "God is Dead" movement of the mid and later 1960s, Harvey Cox's *Secular City* (1965), and Bishops James Pike, Shelby Spong and others who sought to "save" Christianity by accommodating it to the world and denying its historic character altogether. The latter is reflected by Evangelicals and Catholics Together, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, periodicals like *First Things* and the like, all of which sought to preserve Christianity by some sort of rapprochement between conservative Catholics and Protestants or in other ways battled the slide into heterodoxy.

In the second main section of the book, having established his theme of declension, Douthat examines that into which religion in America has descended, moving from orthodoxy to heresy. The first thing that he examines is the fixation in recent years on “alternative Christianities,” the “lost gospels” (like the Gospel of Thomas), all the kind of stuff that is part and parcel of Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code* and works like it that profess to tell us what Jesus was really like (certainly not God) and how that real Christianity was suppressed and defeated by Constantine and company, who manufactured orthodoxy through the church councils. Many people who wish to jettison claims of historic Christianity, particularly sexual or other ethical strictures, adopt a conspiratorial approach, claiming that orthodoxy repressed a freer more sexually expressive religion and recovering a gnostic or Manichaean past will liberate us from the iron shackles of orthodoxy and traditional Christian mores.

Douthat then proceeds to examine the retreat of many into the prosperity gospel of a Joel Osteen. Osteen is simply the latest, and most widely marketable, of a whole series of televangelists who peddle the Christian life as “your path to success.” Orthodoxy means very little to them and is at best downplayed (Osteen never speaks of sin and judgment) and at worse denied (by folk like Kenneth Copeland or Benny Hinn, the latter of which teaches that there are, at least, nine persons in the Trinity). The prosperity gospel implies, if it does not in every case outright teach, that God blesses the faithful with physical and material well-being in this life and that one’s physical, and fiscal, well-being is an index of one’s spiritual health. This fits right in with America and the rich growing richer. Douthat of course finds this at variance with the highest form of Roman Catholicism, namely, monasticism. It goes against, in fact, the Christian tenet of the centrality of suffering in the Christian life in which God uses suffering to sanctify us. Many have retreated into this unorthodoxy.

Another form of spirituality that rejects orthodoxy and has gained much popularity in recent years is that of the “God within,” that Eastern sort of religion that Elizabeth Gilbert (of *Eat, Pray, Love*) embodies and that finds support by a variety of media types, especially Oprah Winfrey. “This theology,” writes Douthat, “overlaps in some interesting respects with the prosperity gospel. Both propose an answer to the problem of theodicy; both blur the distinction between God and man; both open a path to numinous experience for people uncomfortable with the flesh-and-blood miracles of Christian orthodoxy; both insist on a tight link between spiritual health and physical well-being” (216-217). He continues making comparisons and contrasts between the two, ending with these punchy observations: “The prosperity gospel is a theology of striving and reaching and demanding; the gospel of the God Within is a theology of letting go. The pros-

perity gospel makes the divine sound like your broker; the theology of the God Within makes him sound like your shrink" (217).

What Americans need, Douthat opines, is a return to orthodoxy, not prosperity gospel, the God Within, or mere civil religion. He does not think that the cure for our national malaise resides in a misguided emphasis of the "city upon a hill." He notes, rightly, that for John Winthrop the city-on-a-hill metaphor meant that the American experiment was one of enormous responsibility: in this schema, it was the duty of the Puritans here to use all God had given them to serve him and to seek to model a godly civilization for the watching world. Too often, though, partisans of the left or right, of one side or other of some political divide, have sought to co-opt Christianity for civil religious purposes. Americans have not so much been in the service of Christianity but we have sought to put it in service of something that we regard as higher and ultimate, usually politics. Typically, those on the left have sought to have civil religion serve messianism and those of the right apocalypticism, though in recent years that has often reversed. Douthat, in the final analysis, sees the civil rights movement, as distilled in King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," as a "model for Christian engagement with politics;" though he ends with the recognition that "there is no single Christian politics, and no movement can claim to have arrived at the perfect marriage of religious faith and political action. Christianity is too otherworldly for that, and the world too fallen" (275).

In his conclusion, "The Recovery of Christianity," Douthat's prescription for all the ills that ail us is rather modest. First he raises the possibility that the "postmodern opportunity" affords us: that the very trends that have seemingly undone institutional Christianity could ultimately renew it" (278). But the accommodationist "trap" must be avoided. This leads Douthat to suggest that a separatist model might help: those churches that are resistant to cultural capitulation and their Christian-educated or homeschooled children could offer hope. Perhaps the Next Christendom identified by Philip Jenkins in which the "two-thirds" world will evangelize the West that once evangelized them. Perhaps "an age of diminished expectations" of what we shall receive from this world, given especially the economic meltdown of recent years, will turn our eyes heavenward and our hearts to orthodoxy (283). What the church needs, Douthat argues, is to be "political without being partisan" (284), "ecumenical but also confessional" (286), citing as a good example of both, PCA Pastor Tim Keller and the ministry of his church, New York City's Redeemer Presbyterian Church (287-288). It also needs to be "moralistic but also holistic" (290) and, finally, "oriented toward sanctity and beauty" (291), ending with the admonition to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (293).

What ought we to make of Douthat's diagnosis and recommended cure? He has many insights, chiefly that Americans are not so much

a people who have no religion or spirituality but that they have lots of it, much of it not reflective of historic Christianity; in short, they *are* a nation of heretics. His high regard, however, for the “orthodox” era, the period preceding our current era which he regards as in decline, is misplaced—Reinhold Niebuhr was neo-orthodox, not quite the same thing as orthodox. I cannot rejoice in neo-orthodoxy, recalling the striking aphorism of Robert Knudsen, my professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, who studied with the neo-orthodox and knew them well: “I refuse,” Dr. Knudsen said, “to accept as orthodoxy that which has arisen phoenix-like from the ashes of the destruction of orthodoxy.” Furthermore, as significant and as needed as the civil rights work of Dr. King was, he may not be counted as orthodox. Therefore the observed decline that followed hard upon the heels of men like Niebuhr and King was, arguably, further development of already heterodox positions.

Far better for the Christian church to maintain biblical and confessional orthodoxy, as the NAPARC churches have sought largely to do, and to maintain a proper spirituality, not involving themselves as institutions in politics as such, but equipping their members to serve the Lord in all spheres of life to which each one is called. Doubtless as a Roman Catholic has a rather different vision of this than do we who believe that the Word ought to govern us as Christian in all things, appropriate to the family, state, school, businesses, and neighborhoods as well as our churches. Doubtless that’s concluding exhortation to “seek first His kingdom and righteousness” with the confidence that “all these things will be added unto you” is apt, something about which we can all agree. We need renewal in the church and spiritual awakening in our society for this to come about. Our truest need is spiritual and we must look to our Triune God to meet it.

—Alan D. Strange

Daniel J. Ebert, IV. *Wisdom Christology: How Jesus Becomes God’s Wisdom for Us*. In *Explorations in Biblical Theology*, ed. Robert A. Peterson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011. Pp. xii + 224. \$17.99.

Ebert’s book on wisdom Christology is a volume in the series, *Explorations in Biblical Theology*, edited by Robert A. Peterson, professor of systematic theology at Covenant Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. The purpose of the series is to offer solid theological expositions of biblical themes or books, but to do so in a way that is suitable to a general readership. The general aim of the books is to instruct the people of God in the teaching of Scripture so as to enrich their knowledge and furnish them for their life and witness.

The theme of Ebert's book is well expressed in the subtitle. Ebert aims to develop how God's wisdom is revealed through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, the apostle Paul declares that Christ Jesus was made by God to be "our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Whereas the Christian church has focused considerable attention upon the manner in which Christ is our righteousness and sanctification, the theme of Christ as the wisdom of God has often been overlooked or diminished. Ebert's intention with his study is to redress this gap in the doctrine of Christ's person and work.

After an introductory chapter on the need for a consideration of Christ as the wisdom of God, Ebert divides his study into two major divisions. The first division addresses the topic of "wisdom's invitation," and the second division the topic of "wisdom and the cross." In the six chapters that constitute the heart of his study, Ebert traces the way the New Testament develops the theme of the revelation of God's wisdom in Christ and particularly in his saving work on the cross. In his concluding chapter, Ebert describes what it should mean for Christian believers to live in the wisdom of Christ.

Ebert's study is a helpful treatment of a neglected topic in Christian theology. One important feature of his treatment is an evaluation of the claim that Christology needs to take more seriously the implications of the theme of the personification of wisdom in the person of Christ. Contrary to some unbiblical and speculative attempts to appeal to this theme to advance a "Lady Wisdom" Christology, Ebert offers a careful and modest handling of the significance of the theme of wisdom for an understanding of the person and work of Christ.

For those who wish instruction on the neglected theme of wisdom in the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ, Ebert's book would be a good book with which to begin. It could also serve well as the basis for church education class, since this volume includes a common feature in the series, namely, a section on "Questions for Further Study and Reflection."

—Cornelis P. Venema

Andrew Hoffercker. *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011. Pp. 460. \$19.99.

Surely, 2011 turned out to be a sort of *annus mirabilis* for students of Charles Hodge. Though Hodge had never enjoyed a biographer other than his son, Archibald Alexander, and that many years ago, Paul Gutjahr produced in Spring 2011 a work chock-full of historical details on Hodge and his times, published by Oxford (reviewed by this writer in the MJT, 2011). And in Fall 2011, Andrew Hoffercker, now an Emeritus Professor of Church History at Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson, MS), published his long anticipated tome, the

most recent volume in the American Reformed Biographies series that P&R began a few years back with Sean Lucas's biography of Robert Lewis Dabney. Hoffercker's biography, coming as it does not only from one who is sympathetic (Gutjahr also evinces sympathy for Hodge), but who is also an insider and theologically on the same page, serves a role that Gutjahr's doesn't. Perhaps this is the best way to get a handle on the two: Gutjahr's is good for historical detail and context, while Hoffercker's better explains who Hodge is theologically and what makes him tick. Both are needed. For our readership, if time and budget permit only one, this is the one to buy.

One of the great benefits of this new biography of Hodge is how long Hoffercker has been contemplating his subject. Hoffercker published with P&R thirty years earlier a version of his doctoral dissertation from Brown University, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield*. Hoffercker's burden three decades ago was to acquit Old Princeton of the charge of rationalism. Many of us were taught that, particularly in comparison with Old Amsterdam (Kuyper and Bavinck), Old Princeton was captive to Scottish Common Sense Realism, an overly scientific approach that objectified the faith and paved the path for its modernistic demise. While Hoffercker did not deny that Old Princeton was influenced, perhaps too much at times, by such an approach, he contended that her deeper commitments were rooted in the Reformed faith (specifically, the Westminster Standards) and the piety that accompanied that, balancing the objective with the subjective more than many of her detractors were willing to concede.

Only quite recently, in works by Paul Helseth, Fred Zaspel, David Smith, and others, scholarship on Old Princeton has begun to undergo a paradigm shift. No longer can it be assumed that Old Princeton was captive to rationalism or empiricism: works by these writers have focused on the piety-driven aspects of Old Princeton, particularly in recognizing that nothing, including Common Sense Realism, was more formative for Princeton than was the Bible and the Westminster Standards. Hoffercker, however, had already come to this conclusion, and published it, some three decades ago. Thus Hoffercker anticipated the current paradigm shift and has viewed Old Princeton through such lens for some time.

With this biography of Hodge, Hoffercker, focusing on the Princetonian of greatest longevity and influence (Hodge taught more than three thousand students in over fifty-six years as a professor at Princeton), goes into greater depth than he did in his work of thirty years ago while continuing to argue in the same vein. He depicts Hodge as a man of learning and piety, of scholarship and godliness. Particularly, Hodge was a man of New Side sympathies who became the leading Old School theologian, especially in terms of influence and longevity. Hodge's family was a part of Second Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, a New Side congregation begun in the time of

and in response to the preaching of George Whitfield. Though Hodge himself became critical, even sharply so, of aspects of the Great Awakening and of the New Side position, he thought that both the New Side and the Old Side brought good things to the table and he rejoiced in their 1758 reunion. Hodge was reluctant for the Old School/New School split in 1837 but soon came to support it as he saw its necessity doctrinally as well as in terms of polity. He opposed, however, the Old School/New School reunion of 1869 because he was not convinced that the doctrinal and confessional issues that led to it had been resolved or even addressed. Hoffecker addresses all of this and more in this new biography of Hodge.

While this reviewer finds Hoffecker's biography quite good on the whole there are a few surprises or matters with which I take issue. Hoffecker's recounting of the Hodge/Nevin debate over the Lord's Supper (and allied subjects) in which he depicts Hodge as forsaking his customary moderate stance, and perhaps even the kindness and respect that he usually paid to disputants, was somewhat surprising. He sees Nevin as clearly getting the better of the exchange and of Hodge being bested. While I can agree that some of Hodge's standard equanimity seemed to have left him during this debate, and while personally being between Nevin and Hodge on some issues of their debate, I think that Hodge was more right about some things than Hoffecker credits him, particularly the question of Nevin's Hegelianism. I think that Hodge is right that, in several respects, Hegelian methodology and thought unduly influenced Nevin and rendered him unsound with respect to some of his doctrine, certainly in the areas of soteriology and ecclesiology.

Another nit which I wish to pick will be dealt with, D.V., at length in another work in which I am now engaged, having to do with the question of the spirituality of the church. Hoffecker rightly demonstrates that Hodge had a doctrine of the spirituality of the church, albeit different from Thornwell's and others. Hodge's doctrine meant that the task of the church at its core was spiritual, not political, and any political ramifications that resulted from her God-ordained tasks (particularly the exercise of the means of grace) were incidental and the distinctly political should never be her aim. He was quite sophisticated and nuanced with respect to this difficult question. Hoffecker cites Hodge's opposition to the Gardiner Spring Resolutions in 1861 and the Pittsburgh Orders of 1865 as if these two things were the same or as if Hodge's opposition was precisely the same. How Hodge interacted with church/state issues from 1862-1865 is crucial here and in skipping treatment of those years, Hoffecker misses those important developments in Hodge's thought and over-simplifies Hodge's doctrine of the spirituality of the church. Perhaps, however, given the general scope of this work as a biography, one ought not to expect more detailed treatment of this question.

There are other historical details that Hoffecker misses. For instance, he notes that “Hodge did not attend the 1869 General Assembly in New York and therefore could not write his annual summary of its proceedings” (326). Hodge, due to health, mainly, rarely attended the General Assembly, not attending for the first time until 1842, twenty years after becoming a professor at Princeton. He did not write his annual Assembly article in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* because he was in attendance at those Assemblies, relying instead on reports of the press and friends, writing those summaries so that he might both inform, and help to form, the church. Hoffecker seems elsewhere to think that Hodge was at Assemblies that he did not attend. With respect to the 1869 Old School/New School reunion, Hoffecker notes the differing resolutions for union of Henry Boynton Smith and Phineas Gurley, failing to point out the irony that the more “liberal” proposal came from one who was an Old Schooler (Gurley). It is noted that Gurley was former Senate chaplain, but Hoffecker does not note that he was the pastor of President Lincoln. Gurley was completely captivated by the dead President’s commitment to the Federal Union and likely was willing to pursue union in the church even if a high price was to be paid to get it, i.e., the purity of the church was the price to pay for its unity. Hoffecker should have been more sensitive to these sorts of historical considerations as it would have shed more light on his otherwise good arguments.

Those minor matters, notwithstanding, this is a book worthy of serious perusal and I would urge all readers interested in American church history, and church history more broadly, not simply Presbyterian history, to read this significant volume.

—Alan D. Strange

Timothy Keller, with Kathy Keller. *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*. New York: Dutton, 2011. Pp. 288. \$25.95 (cloth).

The thought of a Presbyterian pastor preaching a message of Christ-centered, monogamous, life-long, heterosexual marriage to a New York City congregation brings to mind the image of a man casting grains of sand into the wind. Most Christians would see this as not merely a daunting task, but a futile one, especially when doing so within the very eye of America’s urban, secularized storm. But this is precisely what Pastor Tim Keller has been doing for over twenty years: a voice in the desert calling men and women to Christ.

*The Meaning of Marriage* makes the case for marriage that, in the best sense of the term, is truly counter-cultural. Keller’s voice in the cultural desert brings to mind the recent death of another prominent

New York voice, Nora Ephron, whose enormously popular writings on the relationship between the sexes often betray a morbid cynicism regarding the possibility that men and women could ever discover lasting joy in marriage. Keller, in stark contrast, offers a message of hope built upon the wisdom of God and the saving work of Jesus Christ. In the book's introduction he clearly states his case: "Unless you're able to look at marriage through the lens of Scripture instead of through your own fears or romanticism, your particular experience, or through your culture's narrow perspectives, you won't be able to make intelligent decisions about your own marital future" (17).

Those familiar with Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City may think it odd to find him writing a book on marriage. After all, the vast majority of this large congregation is comprised of single adults pursuing educational and career opportunities in the Big Apple. But the author makes it clear that the book is intended for both single and married people. In fact, Keller asserts that many single people may have gone the path of singleness precisely because of misguided understandings of marriage or because they have witnessed the disastrous marriages of others. In that sense, *The Meaning of Marriage* is intended to be a biblical corrective to the fears, myths and lies that inform and shape contemporary attitudes toward marriage.

The challenge of Keller's task becomes evident at the very outset of his book as he deals with the sad statistics regarding marriage in America. Divorce, illegitimate births, single-parent homes and sexual promiscuity dominate the cultural landscape. In many cases there is either a complete ignorance of the biblical design for marriage and the family or an open defiance against the will of the Creator. Acknowledging and affirming God's sovereign design at the creation is the first step in the way of wisdom. To ignore or defy this wisdom is not only folly, but the certain path to ruin and misery.

Much of *The Meaning of Marriage* develops Keller's exposition of Ephesians 5:18-33. By doing so, Keller skillfully demonstrates how the gospel of Jesus Christ enables us to understand the structures and dynamics of marriage and how marriage helps us to understand the structures and dynamics of the gospel. In this regard the author places a strong emphasis upon the redeeming power of Christ to deliver us from the bondage of sin, particularly the bondage to self. The power for marriage resides in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, who enables husbands and wives to submit to each other in Christian love and to embrace the roles ordained for them from the very dawn of creation. The relationship of love and submission, we discover, reflects the very pattern of the triune God, where Father, Son and Holy Spirit have existed in perfect love, service and fellowship from all eternity. That very relationship enables us to understand and embrace the gender roles defined by Scripture.

What is particularly insightful and helpful about Keller's book is his strong emphasis upon the covenantal commitment that forms the foundation of marriage. It is at this point that Keller is at his counter-cultural best. He exposes the folly of romanticism and utilitarianism by drawing attention to God's purpose or mission in marriage, which is for two spiritual friends to assist each other in becoming the kind of persons God designed them to be. Happiness and holiness are not mutually exclusive, argues Keller, for "If you understand what holiness is, you come to see that real happiness is on the far side of holiness, not the near side" (132). In delineating this purpose, Keller makes a compelling case that marriage-as-friendship fits perfectly with love-as-commitment as the outworking of the gospel.

In chapter seven, Keller offers sound pastoral guidance for singles, including a biblical understanding of the gift of singleness, the proper motivations for remaining single and seeking marriage, and the ways to nurture godly relationships with the expectation of marriage. This chapter is full of practical wisdom, reflecting Keller's extensive pastoral work among single adults. To cite just one example: "One of the ways you can judge whether you have moved past the infatuation stage is to ask a set of questions. Have you been through and solved a few sharp conflicts? Have you been through a cycle of repenting and forgiving? Have each of you shown the other that you can make changes out of love for the other? Two kinds of couples answer no. The first kind are those who never have any conflicts. It may be that they are not past infatuation. The second kind of couple has had a stormy relationship and has the same unresolved fights over and over again. They haven't learned even the rudimentary skills of repentance, forgiveness, and change. Neither of these couples may be ready for marriage" (214, 215).

The eighth and final chapter exposes many of the contemporary myths surrounding human sexuality (sex as mere appetite, sex is dirty, sex is a strictly private matter) and the biblical alternative (sex as a uniting act, sex as commitment). When practiced in the Spirit's power and according to the Lord's design, sex within marriage is not merely a permissible activity, but a glorious one. Writes Keller, "Sex is glorious not only because it reflects the joy of the Trinity but also because it points to the eternal delight of soul that we will have in heaven, in our loving relationships with God and one another. Romans 7:1ff. tells us that the best marriages are pointers to the deep, infinitely fulfilling, and final union we will have with Christ in love" (236).

*The Meaning of Marriage* may very well be one of the finest contemporary Christian books on the subject of marriage. It is thoroughly biblical in its theology, perceptive and insightful in its understanding of the human condition in the contemporary culture, and judicious, wise and practical in its application of the gospel to everyday

life. It is an invaluable tool—not only to guide the saved, but also to reach the lost.

—Paul R. Ipema

Heath Lambert. *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*. Foreword by David Powlison. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012. Pp. 220. \$17.99.

This book, which first appeared in the form of a Ph.D. dissertation under the supervision of David Powlison, relates a little understood story, namely how the biblical counseling movement has grown and changed through the years, and that for the better. Whether one endorses this movement or wishes to stand apart from it, Heath Lambert's work is a most valuable resource for pastors to have on their shelf. First tracing out the birth of the biblical counseling movement and the need for growth in this aspect of pastoral ministry, the author in four successive chapters examines four areas of growth and advancement: (1) how biblical counselors *think* about counseling; (2) how biblical counselors *do* counseling; (3) how biblical counselors *talk about* counseling; and (4) how biblical counselors *think about the Bible*.

In brief, in examining how biblical counselors think about counseling Lambert scrutinizes particularly Adam's view of sin, suffering, and motivation, and how the subsequent generation of biblical counselors offers a superior analysis and perspective of these topics. Next, Lambert takes up how biblical counselors do counseling. Here he explores counseling methodology, especially the need for methodological development through an approach that (1) is familial; (2) demonstrates affection; (3) is sacrificial and person-oriented, where the counselor is viewed as fellow-sinner; and (4) addresses suffering before it addresses sin.

Concerning how counselors talk about counseling, Lambert has in view how biblical counselors defend the biblical counseling model and how they talk about and critique other models and approaches to counseling. As for how biblical counselors talk about the Bible, I found this aspect of the chapter a bit odd inasmuch as the burden of the argument is that there has been no advancement between the first generation of practitioners of the biblical counseling movement and the second generation writers. Contrary to some recent observers, it is a mistake, says Lambert, to distinguish the principal players—practitioners and theorists—of the biblical counseling movement from the first to the second generations as constituting distinct approaches, since they share the same convictions regarding the sufficiency of Scripture. What then is the advancement? Apparently, it is not in how biblical counselors appeal to the Bible, nor how they regard the Bible as altogether and comprehensively sufficient for coun-

seling, nor how that sufficiency precludes contributions from the field of psychology, but the advancement is in how the second generation “talks about” these topics.

The final chapter explores an area of the biblical counseling movement still in need of advancement. The heart motivation advancement within this movement, explored in chapter two of the book (idols and idolatry), must be nonetheless supplemented and deepened by examining the “sinful, self-exalting heart.” Lambert offers many cogent observations in this chapter. The specific benefit of seeing the interplay between idolatry and the sinful, self-exalting heart is that it allows for a better understanding of pride, people, sin, and repentance, and it also makes for compassionate counseling and protects us from “idol hunts” and a misguided “introspection.” This is a very kind of way of saying that the “idols of the heart” model is just a bit too formulaic.

This valuable book includes a foreword by David Powlison, as well as a conclusion, subtitled “Increasingly Competent to Counsel,” an appendix, and a useful bibliography.

—J. Mark Beach

Robert Letham. *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context*. The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith: A Series, ed., Carl R. Trueman. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009. Pp. xvi + 399. \$24.99.

With this volume, Robert Letham offers readers a well-executed book on the history and background to the Westminster Assembly, along with a synthetic analysis of the theology of the Westminster documents.

Letham is a full-time lecturer at Wales Evangelical School of Theology. In this book, the author examines the historical and theological context of the Westminster Assembly. This composes parts one and two of this three-part volume. Letham has clear control of the subject matter treated in these pages. It is weightier and lengthier than what is usually found in more popular treatments of the Westminster Standards. This portion of the book is cogently and succinctly presented. Under the section on the theological context, Letham has chapters that explore the English context, the sources of the Assembly’s theology, and the Reformed and Catholic contexts for the theological work accomplished at Westminster. Letham demonstrates that the old *Calvin-against-the-Calvinists* thesis—thus Calvin against the Westminster Assembly—has been discredited. Letham also takes on certain modern theologians who are openly hostile to the federal theology proffered in the Westminster writings (see especially chapters five and six).

More than most expositors on the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Letham expounds these materials with historical and theological awareness and sensitivity, with the result that there is a serious attempt not to “accommodate” these documents to one’s own theological agenda, nor is there the flattening out of the Westminster theology to make it more uniform than it in fact is.

Part three, which comprises over two-thirds of the book’s contents, examines various teachings of the Westminster standards. Here readers will find chapters that treat the doctrine of Scripture, God and the Trinity, God’s sovereign freedom, the doctrine of humanity and the nature of sin, Christ and covenant, the order of salvation, law and liberty, church and sacraments, and, lastly, death, resurrection, and judgment.

For the purposes of this review, and given some of the currents of theological discussion among confessionally Reformed churches nowadays, I will briefly engage Letham in his treatment of the covenants of works and grace, though only features of each.

In taking up the Westminster materials on the covenant, Letham properly observes that there has been a great deal of criticism directed against the covenant of works in recent times. John Murray, for example, disliked the term “covenant of works” inasmuch as he did not find any mention of a covenant in Genesis 1 and 2 and inasmuch as the language of “works” fails to safeguard the elements of grace which properly define this covenant. In reply, Letham rightly states the following: “The simple solution to Murray’s problem would have been to use the term ‘covenant of life,’ which the Assembly also approved. As for the absence of any mention of covenant in Genesis 2, the Pauline parallel between the first and second Adams and the indisputably covenantal setting of the second Adam argues that the creation administration was indeed a covenant—all the more so since all the ingredients of a covenant are present” (230).

Meanwhile, Letham observes that “some defenses of the pre-fall covenant have erred in the opposite direction.” Here he considers the views of Meredith Kline, who in drawing important parallels between ancient Near Eastern covenants and the biblical covenants concludes that the former, like the latter, are essentially law covenants. Promises are, consequently, ancillary to law. Since law is the driving idea here, “Adam’s obedience,” according to Kline, was “meritorious”—even more, it was *strictly* meritorious. This means that Adam, under the covenant of works, “would have earned everlasting life as a just reward for his compliance with the terms of” that covenant (230-31). Since Christ strictly earned salvation for sinners as the last Adam, likewise, the first Adam, had he obeyed, would have strictly earned or merited the promised blessing.

The implications of Kline’s views are troubling. For Kline (and for those who adhere to Kline’s view), the parallel between Adam and Christ is pressed to the extreme, with two distinct consequences: (1)

If the first Adam does not earn blessing in Paradise according to strict merit, then neither does the last Adam, Christ, earn salvation and blessing for his people according to strict merit. To fail to follow Kline on these points is to compromise, practically undermine, the doctrine of the atonement and justification by faith alone. (2) In back of this, of course, or so it seems, is that if one does not agree with Kline's version of the covenant of works, then he or she cannot safeguard the doctrine of justification by faith alone. That is, such persons hold to a compromised position and are less than Reformed. Letham does not expressly say this, but these are the implications of Kline's position.

In any case, in reply to Kline's approach, which is vigorously promoted by some of his followers today, Letham offers some lucid and corrective observations. Says Letham: "That a reading of the Assembly's doctrine of the covenant of works from Kline's perspective is mistaken is evident from a number of considerations. First, the Confession stresses condescension as underlying all God's covenants, including the pre-fall one. Whatever the place of law may be, it is in harmony with God's free and sovereign stooping down to do us a favor." Next, and second, Letham says the following: "for the Assembly, law and grace were not polar opposites; it saw no incompatibility between them. Law is present in the covenant of grace, both in the time of the law (WCF 7.5) and also in the time of the gospel. In the covenant of grace, grace and law are not competing ways of salvation. Instead, they fulfill different roles. Grace constitutes; law regulates. The covenant is pervasively gracious, yet we receive the promise through the obedience of Christ, and the law continues to regulate the life of the Christian (WCF 20.2, 5-7). Hence, the Assembly insists that the uses of the law are not contrary to the gospel, "but do sweetly comply with it' (20.7)" (231). Letham bolsters his point by quoting from John Leith, who rightly observes that the covenant of works was not a covenant of merit per se, given that God establishes a covenant with man in Paradise for his blessing, which in and of itself is a gracious act of God—that is, gracious in the sense of undeserved and unearned. Moreover, there exists a great disparity between God and man, Creator and creature, and that disallows any possibility of human works in and of themselves earning such blessing. Letham continues in this vein, appealing to John Ball, the Puritan writer whose book on the covenants was published during the Westminster Assembly (1645), and which well represents the Westminster documents. Indeed, Ball may be regarded as a formative and informative figure for expounding Westminster theology. For his part, he denies that Adam's works were meritorious—certainly not meritorious in Kline's sense of the word (231-32).

According to Letham, Kline's line of argument "is wrong from both historical and theological angles." If Kline was correct in the way he parses out a doctrine of the covenant of works according to strict

merit and the subsequent work of Christ for our salvation, then any theology that does not have Kline's version of the covenant of works—such as Calvin's theology— forfeits a biblical doctrine of the atonement. That is absurd. If one uses Kline's perspective as the litmus test for purity of Reformed doctrine, and then applies this litmus test to earlier codifications of Reformed theology in its historical and theological development, the only conclusion to be reached is that "significant swathes of earlier Reformed theology" are "defective." Letham doesn't say it, but this gives us a new version of Reformed theology at odds with itself—this time it is *Calvin-against-the Calvinists* à la Kline, with Calvin cast as the rogue and Kline as the defender of orthodoxy. I agree with Letham when he offers this forthright assessment: "Kline is historically inaccurate and theologically too blunt. On the absence of grace, Kline is simply wrong. The Westminster documents clearly affirm that grace was present before the fall. This no more undermines the doctrine of the atonement than Kline does. The divines were able to hold on to an orthodox view of the work of Christ. If Kline were correct, this could not have happened" (232).

Turning to the covenant of grace, Letham presents a sound analysis of the Westminster materials on this doctrine. In addressing the various administrations of the covenant of grace, Letham properly notes that the language "under the law and under the gospel" (cf. WFC 7.5; LC 33), refers to the redemptive-historical distinction between the Old and New Testaments. More to the point, "it is a distinction that relates to the administration of the covenant, not to its substance or intrinsic nature" (233). Law and gospel, then, are "different means of administering the covenant of grace." Since the substance of the covenant—the substance being Christ—is what makes *the covenant* of grace the covenant of *grace*, this covenant bears a testamentary character that may not be set aside—not under the period of the Old Testament (including the period of the Mosaic economy), and not under the period of the New Testament. The testamentary character of the covenant of grace must not be neglected. In fact, as Letham points out, the contrast between law and gospel does not mount up to incompatibility; on the contrary, their compatibility is "more basic" (233). "The law was not an alternative way of salvation, but the means of administering the one and only way of salvation in Christ in the covenant of grace" under the Mosaic economy (234).

This book is a fine addition to a number of books that analyze the Westminster Assembly. It is neither a popular treatment nor a highly academic resource. It nicely fits an intermediate level of presentation, geared for pastors and theological students, and interested laypersons. Scholars, however, will find plenty to chew on as well.

—J. Mark Beach

Thomas H. McCall. *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, and Why It Matters*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2012. Pp. 171. \$20.00.

In taking up the terrifying words of Jesus from the cross *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Tom McCall asks four very important theological questions: (1) Was the Trinity broken? (2) Did the death of Jesus make it possible for God to love me? (3) Was the death of Jesus a meaningless tragedy? And (4) Does it make a difference?

McCall is associate professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. His particular areas of expertise are the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology, which well positions him to address these questions. Indeed, this book reveals that he possesses the requisite gifts to take up the project that this book explores.

In response to the famous and influential theologian Jürgen Moltmann, who has argued that these words of Jesus on the cross constitute a rupture within the Godhead—such that there exists enmity between God and God, God being against God, so that the unity of the Trinity is broken—and in response to some evangelical biblical commentators who give voice to similar sentiments, McCall presents contrary views from the early church, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation, which argue that it is severely mistaken to say that the Trinity is broken.

McCall marshals a full array of arguments—whether one is oriented to modern social trinitarianism or classic Latin trinitarianism—to rebut the broken Trinity thesis. For example, gleaned remarks from Bruce D. Marshall, McCall notes how the notion that Christ becomes Fatherless entails that the Father has forfeited whatever constitutes his paternal relation to the Son. But can God abandon his paternity genuinely? In order to do so, God would have to forfeit his personhood as Father—in which case, who is this divine person? Moreover, as the Son is no longer the Son of the Father, he is a non-entity, or more literally ceases to exist.

Should one wish to run to the social trinitarian end of the spectrum of Trinity doctrine, the problem still remains, for social trinitarians typically cling tenaciously to the doctrine of *perichoresis*, the circumcession or interpenetration, and therefore the fellowship of the divine persons with one another, which forms an *unbreakable bond* of loving communion. The God-against-God thesis is untenable from the start. Moreover, if God's being is relational-being, God ceases to be God if the divine persons of the Trinity are opposed to one another or the relationship between them is broken. The above is merely a sampling of the sorts of issues that McCall takes up in defending an unbroken Trinity position.

Chapter two addresses the second question we noted earlier. Here McCall offers a fine summary of the diverse arguments surrounding

the idea of God's wrath and the word "propitiation." In this connection he also considers the doctrines of divine impassibility and divine simplicity. McCall ably presents the divided opinion on these topics, which serve to bring him to the defense of the *biblical understanding* of divine wrath, such that God's wrath is real and personal and God's holy love is the source of his righteous wrath. In answer to the question at hand, McCall cogently and persuasively demonstrates that God does not love us because of the atoning work of Christ for us; rather, because of God's love for us, he secures the path of rescue through the work of his beloved (and forsaken) Son.

From here we can predict that McCall is going to reject the notion that Jesus' death was a meaningless tragedy; and therefore he is also going to affirm that how we answer the earlier questions has important implications for theology and the gospel. Thus, more specifically, chapter three treats foreknowledge, fulfillment and the plan of God, while chapter four explores the doctrines of justification and sanctification. Indeed, it makes a big difference how we respond to the proffered questions that shape this volume.

My attraction to this book, in part, is grounded in a disturbing incident I once witnessed at church during my college years. Following a worship service in which the pastor was asked whether his sermon didn't suggest that the Holy Trinity was broken, he replied, in ear-shot of many parishioners, that in fact it did, which he said speaks the mystery of Christ's forsakenness and the serious nature, at cost to God himself, of the doctrine of the atonement. Well, the proverbial lid blew off the kettle. Some well-studied laypersons were none too pleased with that answer and proceeded to offer some choice words to inform the pastor of their disapproval. If only the well intentioned pastor had read a book like this one prior to this unhappy episode!

In gratitude, our warm nod of approval to the author for this well-conceived and intelligent study of the Trinity, the cross of Christ, and why it matters.

—J. Mark Beach

Christopher W. Morgan. *A Theology of James: Wisdom for God's People*. Explorations in Biblical Theology, ed. Robert A. Peterson. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2011. Pp. xviii + 218 with indexes.

Christopher W. Morgan, who teaches at the School of Christian Ministries at California Baptist University in Riverside California, is well suited to the task of writing on the topic of this book, the wisdom teaching of the book of James. Morgan is the co-author (with Dale Wellenburg) of an exegetical and pastoral commentary on the book of James (*James: Wisdom for Community*). The fruits of his

commentary are evident throughout his interesting and informative introduction to the theology and wisdom teaching of James.

Morgan's study is in the series, *Explorations in Biblical Theology* (series editor, Robert A. Peterson). The series consists of two kinds of books, some on biblical themes and others on particular books of the Bible. Morgan's book belongs to the second type. Though it is not in the genre of a commentary, it provides a broad sketch of the teaching of the book of James. The first chapter deals with some of the typical introductory questions that are addressed in a commentary (authorship, recipients, date of writing, occasion, etc.). The second chapter identifies some of the sources of James' theology. Chapters three through twelve address a number of themes in the book and attempt to outline the primary themes of James' theology. The concluding chapter seeks to offer some implications of the teaching of James for the life and witness of the church today.

In the course of his sketch of the teaching of James, Morgan tackles the knotty question of the relationship between Paul's doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone and James' teaching that a believer is justified, not by a work-less faith, but by a faith that works. Morgan's handling of this question is insightful for the most part. Rather than pitting James against Paul, or Paul against James, Morgan argues that the teaching of James addresses a different question than that addressed by the apostle Paul in his exposition of the doctrine of justification. Both James and Paul concur in teaching that the faith that justifies is never alone. But the burden of James' teaching in James 2, consistent with the theme of his book throughout, is that true faith is a working or fruitful faith. Anyone who claims to be a believer, but whose faith is empty and unfruitful, is self-deceived. Though Morgan's handling of this question is helpful, it does not include a discussion of the way James' use of the term "justify" differs from Paul's. As a result, Morgan's case is not as strong as it might have been on the unanimity between the teaching of James and Paul.

Like other volumes in the series, this book would make a good study guide for an adult Bible study class. Questions for study and discussion are included at the end of the book for this purpose. Morgan's study would also be useful source and aid for a preacher who wishes to preach through the book of James.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Alvin Plantinga. *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 376. \$27.95 (cloth).

Dr. Plantinga will be eighty in November of this year, and it is a testament to his continued vigor and productivity that after “retiring” from Notre Dame in 2010 (where he is O’Brien Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus), he returned to Calvin College to serve as the inaugural holder of the Jellema Chair of Philosophy. Plantinga has published many books in the field that he pioneered—“Reformed philosophy”—being regarded by many as the preeminent Christian philosopher in America. Plantinga has become increasingly clear in his writing and his latest effort is a masterful refutation of naturalism. He has the ability to take an argument apart bit by bit and show its utter folly, yet with unfailing good humor and kindness. He does this time and again, showing that naturalism, which insists that nature is all there is—and that the domain of science thus addresses ultimate reality—deconstructs itself, and thereby destroys the very science that it purports to uphold.

The overall claim of the book is that “there is superficial conflict but deep concord between science and theistic religion, but superficial concord and deep conflict between science and naturalism.” By such a claim, Plantinga brilliantly stands on its head the supposed conflict between science and religion. His contention is that the conflict really lies between science and naturalism, not science and theistic religion. Yes, superficially there appears to be a conflict between science and religion, because one concerns itself with nature and the other with the supernatural. Because there is such a thing as nature, however, does not mean that that’s all there is, which naturalism claims.

Nature and supernature may exist in perfect harmony, Plantinga maintains, but if nature is all there is, then there must be an unguided evolution and an unguided evolution cannot account for human cognitive faculties that produce true beliefs; rather, unguided evolution, which is all that can exist if there’s only nature, can only account for beliefs that have survival value. If beliefs cannot be known to be true, given unguided evolution, but can only be known to aid survival, doubt is cast on all theories, including evolution and naturalism. If, contrarily, man is created in the image of God, by whatever mechanism, such purposefulness means that our faculties would likely be reliable and could be expected to produce true beliefs. Naturalism always involves an unguided evolution and thus provides no warrant for true beliefs; theism, on the other hand, involves intelligent design and provides a greater likelihood for true beliefs and thus upholds evolution in a way that naturalism undermines it.

My criticisms here would be the same as ever with Professor Plantinga, who, it should be noted, does not claim to be an apologist

but a Christian philosopher (many who taken Plantinga's approach, sadly, acknowledge the legitimacy of the latter while seeming dubious about the former). I agree with his internal critique of naturalism but would do so from a biblical standpoint of certainty, as an apologist. And I would want to argue from the impossibility of the contrary, not for the probability of theism, but for the certainty of Christianity. That having been said, Plantinga has no peer in the way in which he can devastatingly, yet with gentleness, take apart the pretensions of naturalism and show that what naturalism purports to support, it really undermines, and that theism better supports science (evolution), yielding a higher probability of producing true beliefs. Plantinga shows, in other words, where the conflict really lies: not between religion and science but between science and worldviews like naturalism that cannot properly support, and really run counter to, science.

—Alan D. Strange

Ted Turnau. *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012. Pp. xix + 346. \$19.99.

Ted Turnau has given us the best kind of book: close to his heart, taught in settings both academic and lay, thought about for years, eager to share for the good of his neighbor and the glory of Christ. This is the kind of book that you think must have been written already and, if not, should be written right away. It's good that Turnau wrote it because Bill Edgar of Westminster Theological Seminary is right: "There is nothing remotely like it in print today." I disagree with some of what Turnau says about cultural elitism—it is true that I am a recovering cultural elitist, well, probably not recovering—there are aesthetic standards, after all. To be sure, Turnau would not disagree, though he can practically sound like an aesthetic relativist at times. Even here, though, he says things that I am convinced that people like me need to hear. It's easy for many of us simply to dismiss much of popular culture as unworthy of engaging, even though we should for the love of neighbor, whom we might reach by a better understanding of what so captivates them.

Turnau, by his own admission, likes much of popular culture. Some of us, particularly those who are called to engage our fellow man apologetically, are only critical of popular culture. Turnau's work serves to remind such that even if we are critical of this or that aspect of popular culture, if we only reject it, we reject engaging our fellow man who likely is steeped in some aspect of popular culture. In short, though everyone is not called to engage everything (certain music and movies, for instance, might prove too much for some), if we love our fellow man, we will engage him where he is, which means knowing something about the popular culture that he has imbibed.

Paul's "becoming all things to all men so that he might by all means win some" is a hard task and not all can or are called to do it, certainly not in the same way or to the same degree. But it's a good thing to endeavor to do, and with respect to popular culture, this book can help one more faithfully to do so. This book can aid us all in understanding the culture in which we live and instruct us as to how we might better serve our fellow man in it.

Dr. Turnau is a teaching fellow for the International Institute for Christian Studies. He currently teaches cultural and religious studies at Anglo-American University and cultural studies at the Social Science Faculty of Charles University in Prague. His Ph.D. is from Westminster Theological Seminary (1999) on Paul Ricoeur entitled, "Reimagining Paul Ricoeur: Popular Culture as Discursive Text, Metaphor and Narrative." Turnau has a good philosophical grasp of modernism and post-modernism and of that which informs the current cultural scenes. As Turnau put it in an interview when asked about his reason for writing this book, "I don't think that Christians know how to respond to popular culture well. And since our world is heavily influenced by popular culture, that means we don't really know how to respond to our world that well. Instead of rejecting or uncritically drinking in popular culture, I'd like to see Christians practice a wise engagement." The bulk of the book, then, involves an examination of how Christians can engage popular culture in an unfruitful fashion (rejecting it, on the one hand; uncritically drinking it in, on the other) or in a fruitful fashion, by practicing a wise engagement of it.

His book is divided into three parts: grounding, not-so-helpful approaches to popular culture, and his approach to popular culture. In the first part, to which Turnau devotes four chapters, he seeks to give some definition (Chapter 1: What is popular culture? What is worldview? Chapter 3: What is a worldview apologetic?) and to address certain relationships (Chapter 2: The influence of popular culture on worldview; Chapter 4: What Creation, Fall, and Redemption tell us about popular culture). This orients us to where Turnau is coming from. He's a Van Tilian who doesn't simply dismiss that which comes from unbelief (this book is about non-Christian popular culture, not Christian popular culture, because internecine Christian disputes are polemics and not apologetics). Rather he recognizes common grace—that even in popular culture something of God and his truth is reflected, coming as it does from man created in the image of God. Unlike some worldview mavens, however, Turnau does not downplay antithesis, understanding that, though man is created in *imago dei*, in his fallen unregenerate state, man is in rebellion. Fallen man, and his cultural products, whether popular or elitist, both reflect God and rebel against God. Turnau is helpful in pointing both of these truths out.

The second part of Turnau's book sets forth several ways that Turnau contends are unhelpful approaches to popular culture for Christians (this takes up the next five chapters). The first wrong approach simply feels immune to the effects of popular culture or dismisses it as light entertainment, not worthy of serious consideration. The second wrong approach to popular culture is to be disgusted by it in a wholesale fashion and refuse to have anything to do with it. The third wrong approach involves high-brow contempt for and looking down on popular culture. This is a long chapter and one likely to foster debate. Turnau does admit that the "heart motivation" of this approach involves a "striving for aesthetic excellence," which desire he affirms. He also argues that there are more important goals to strive for here, particularly in the apologetic context, such as "reaching out to those around us with the hope of Christ." Turnau writes, "Further, the wholesale condemnation of a whole type of culture oversimplifies the aesthetic landscape. Rather than say that all popular culture is trash, we should strive to find what is aesthetically excellent in popular culture. In that way, we reflect the missional heart of God as well as his desire for aesthetic excellence" (133). The reader can decide how much this applies the apologetic task at hand. I may continue to find something aesthetically lacking—that's a consideration of a different sort and one in its own right—and yet appreciate the bridge that this or that bit of popular culture may be to my neighbor with whom I am seeking to establish a basis for gospel witness.

Turnau labels the next wrong approach to popular culture as "imagophobia." He says that "imagophobic cultural critics lament the rise of an image-based, image-driven culture (136). He sees this approach as closely tied to the foregoing "high-brow" approach that dismisses popular culture as jejune. In fact, he argues, some cultural critics, like Neil Postman and Ken Myers, combine the two approaches. He finds the root of such an approach, of course, in Marshall McLuhan and criticizes McLuhan's famous dictum, "the medium is the message" as media determinism (163). I think, in fact, that much of popular culture is jejune and that Turnau's treatment of "imagophobia" is unconvincing at places. Both of these long sections—on "popular culture is shallow" and "image wrongly predominates"—are not necessary to his purpose: what popular culture is and how we engage it is his primary purpose. We don't have to like all the products of popular culture to engage the practitioners of it. The last problematic approach to popular culture that Turnau examines is the one that he calls the "it's all good" perspective. This approach fits well especially with postmodernism, making the reader-response the viewer-response. It's all common grace and no antithesis. We are not to uncritically embrace any culture and make it the lens through which we view all reality. Rather, we are to view all things through the lens of the Christ of Scripture.

Turnau, in the last part of his book, seeks to instruct us on helpful ways to engage popular culture. He suggests five steps when dealing with a popular-cultural text (popular music, graphic novels, films, television shows, video games, magazine stories, novels, etc.): (1) What's the story? (2) Where am I (the world of the text)? (3) What's good and true and beautiful about it? (4) What's false and ugly and perverse about it (and how do I subvert that)? (5) How does the gospel apply here (215)?

There is much involved in the first step of ascertaining and telling the story in one's own words. If it's a film, for example, there is much to address: what's the writer seeking to communicate, how is the director getting it across, how are actors portraying it, etc.? Then, with Question 2, what world, what sort of world, what is the imaginative landscape of the world at which I am looking? Question 3 (and remember these are all non-Christian popular culture artifacts) is locating common grace in this product and Question 4 is about the antithesis, Question 3 highlights how this story manifests God's grace and that we are made in the image of God (and manifest that, though fallen). Question 4 locates the rebellion against God that manifests itself in this cultural product, particularly the identity of the idol I am pursuing. And then, finally, the last question is, how does this product, and how might we, point to Christ, i.e., where does the good news of Christ's living and dying come in and how does it apply in this case? How does the gospel address the idol(s) present here?

After setting forth and delineating the five questions of analysis at some length, Turnau, in chapter 11, seeks to "flesh out the method" he presented "with some practice sessions using examples from popular culture." He then examines a classic-rock song, a documentary, a Japanese anime series, a blockbuster family movie, and Twitter (247). It's fascinating to watch him apply the five questions to each of these examples thoughtfully and skillfully and to think what you might be able to do with this as you interact with your neighbor at the backyard barbecue. In the last chapter, Turnau addresses how one uses this, answering objections like "this takes too much time," people just want to have fun (not analyze popular culture), or this just leads to "arguments and spiritual resistance" (320). Turnau admits that it's not easy, but this encourages the reader to cultivate the patience, gentleness, and humility that Peter encourages in 1 Peter 3.15 and to see themselves as "God's missionary to the metalheads, His ambassador to the anime community," his envoy to the dance club (321). In other words, Turnau encourages his readers to use the cultural milieu in which people are immersed as apologetic starting grounds and a place whereby to reach out with the gospel.

Even though one may not share Turnau's love of popular culture, he or she must share Turnau's love of its practitioners, enough to

seek to understand where it is they live and how we might best bring a gospel witness to bear in a variety of settings.

—Alan D. Strange

Willem Van't Spijker. *Calvin: A Brief Guide to His Life and Thought*. Translated by Lyle D. Bierma. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. Pp. x + 197. \$25.00.

The writing of books that treat Calvin or some aspect of his life and thought seems endless. With such a rich output, novices to Calvin's theology can only stand bewildered before such a glut of sources. Even scholars who are specialists in Calvin have to work hard to keep pace with the numerous books, monographs, essays, and articles that study the great Genevan Reformer. Calvin, indeed, continues to enjoy great attention, and mostly appreciative assessment.

In this light, it might seem unnecessary to have yet another book on Calvin that presents itself as a guide to his thought. However, with the translation and publication of Willem Van't Spijker's modest-sized volume on Calvin's life and thought, readers will find a unique resource. In the first four chapters, Van't Spijker examines (1) Calvin's context, especially the political situation in France at the beginning of the sixteenth century, along with an examination of the relationship between church and crown, religious humanism and the emerging evangelical movement; (2) Calvin's early development—that is, his preparatory education and intellectual development; (3) Calvin's conversion—whether it was “sudden”; and (4) the history of Calvin's *Institutes*. The next five chapters unfold Calvin's life and work divided between his first Genevan period (1536-1538); his time in Strasbourg (1538-1541); and then his return to Geneva, which is broken into three stages: an organization phase (1541-1546), a period of crisis (1546-1555), and finally a time of consolidation (1555-1564). Each of these chapters includes short biography of Calvin's life in the designated period under consideration, the theological controversies that engaged him in those years, principal writings, as well as his work as a pastor, liturgist, polemicist, and battles he had to wage with local opponents. The final two chapters of the book analyze, respectively, the contours of Calvin's theology and his influence.

Van't Spijker is one of the leading Calvin scholars in the Netherlands, where he is a professor at the Theological University of Apeldoorn. Lyle D. Bierma, the translator, has done a fine service in making this volume available to a North American readership.

Among the vast array of books that explore Calvin's life and

thought, this is a fine addition and also a good place to begin one's journey into the rich and insightful world of Calvin's theology.

—J. Mark Beach

Simon Vibert. *Excellence in Preaching: Studying the Craft of Leading Preachers*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2011. Pp. 173. \$16.00.

Simon Vibert is vice principal and director of the School of Preaching at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. The task that he set for himself, which culminates in this book, was to study the work of today's leading preachers (that is, preachers who have gained the reputation and honor of being fine examples of pulpit work), with the aim of discovering the dynamics that come into play for effective preaching. Thus the author here profiles some of the more renowned preachers within contemporary, evangelical Protestantism and beyond, ferreting out practical principles for sermon-making and the event of preaching itself. In short, Vibert looks for principles to be discerned that are biblical, motivational, and transformational.

A number of the preachers who make the list and thus come under Vibert's inspection are fairly well-known to North American evangelicals, though others are likely unfamiliar to many readers. First, Vibert treats Tim Keller, a pastor who excels at exhibiting cultural awareness in his preaching and knows how persuasively to engage philosophical challenges to the Christian faith; next comes John Piper, one who inspires passion for the glory of God in preaching; he is followed by Vaughan Roberts, a preacher who lets the Bible speak with simplicity and freshness. After Roberts, Vibert introduces us (in succession) to Simon Ponsonby, a Word-and-Spirit preacher; J. John, who dismantles barriers through the use of humor and story in order to engage and connect with modern persons; and David Cook, who is a master of creating interest and offering application in sermons. Next Vibert takes readers to the names and labors of John Ortberg, who preaches with spiritual formation in mind; Nicky Gumbel, a man who focuses on and exalts Jesus Christ in preaching; and Rico Tice, who proclaims the Word with urgency and evangelistic zeal. The contributions of these individuals are followed by three familiar names: Alistair Begg, a persuasive preacher, artfully and passionately waging arguments from Scripture; Mark Driscoll, who accentuates teaching with directness, challenging and demonstrating the relevance of the gospel to modern hearers; and, finally, Mark Dever, who is concerned that we preach all of God's Word to God's people.

No doubt, about half of these names are readily recognizable to an American ecclesiastical audience; others are more familiar to the ecclesiastical circles inside the United Kingdom.

Vibert's format for this book is apt. In each chapter, he first introduces readers to the preacher under analysis; this introduction is usually followed by an analytical question: What makes preacher *x* a good communicator? Next, sample sermons are examined. Then, each chapter concludes with a section entitled "Lessons for Preachers." For instance, lessons to be learned from Tim Keller are (in summary form without elaboration): "Anticipate objections"; "Read thoroughly and widely"; "Create intrigue"; and "Preach for a verdict." The list of lessons to be learned from Mark Driscoll are: "Use language that will wake your congregation up"; "Preach in a way that you are comfortable with"; "Provide background information that the congregation needs in order to understand the Bible passage"; and "Be a people person." From David Cook, Vibert gleans the following: "Be genuinely interested in people"; "Constantly apply the passage to yourself and seek resonances with the world around you"; and "Enter the world of the congregation before you seek to draw them into the world of the text."

The concluding chapter of this book has the subtitle: "Preaching that Changes Lives." Here Vibert succinctly assembles insights from 2 Timothy and offers a composite picture of "a good preacher."

For my part, I think that those actively engaged in the task of preaching the gospel should always be seeking to learn from fellow preachers, famous or not. Anytime we are confronted with the gospel, so that the Word is opened, exposed, explained, applied, and hopefully also put on display in the person of the preacher, we need to take note, listen for edification but also for appreciation of the craft of preaching, so that as practitioners of this exalted duty we may improve and become more effective and faithful preachers of Christ.

Whether one agrees with all of Vibert's observations or is happy with each of his choices of preachers to analyze, his book makes good sense and is a helpful contribution to the vast literature on the task of preaching.

—J. Mark Beach