

the word "symbolical," Blocher seems to mean "representative value" of the story's elements. Discussing the historicity first is methodologically better: redemption takes place in the arena of history. The text of Scripture make clear that all the various elements in the Genesis narrative are pregnant with meaning precisely because they stand at the beginning of a real history.

Not everyone will agree with Blocher's conclusions (e.g., the nature of the image of God, the nature of the curse on the woman, the meaning of the two trees, the "sons of God" passage in Gen. 6). Nevertheless, the book is well worth its price, especially in its analysis of the wages of sin (chap. 8) and on the aftermath of sin (chap. 9). Students and pastors who are looking for significant *textual* and *theological* insights that will enrich their understanding of the important issues raised in the text will find this book very useful. It should serve to benefit much historical-redemptive preaching and teaching on the book of Genesis.

Some spelling errors were noted: "excellence" (81) and "ancestor" (230).

Mark D. Vander Hart

John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait, by William J. Bouwsma. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. Pp. viii + 310. \$22.95.

William Bouwsma, professor of history at the University of California at Berkeley, presents in this study of John Calvin a "portrait" which sketches Calvin's *persona* against the background of the spirituality of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance humanism. Bouwsma employs his breadth of knowledge in the Renaissance and Reformation to depict Calvin as a "man of his times," as one who uniquely focused the polarities of the historical period in which he lived and worked.

According to Bouwsma, the Calvin with whom most of us are acquainted is an abstraction and chiefly the artifact of later Calvinism. Commonly, Bouwsma argues, Calvin's

thought is treated ahistorically and is assumed to be free from the confusion and incoherence that is otherwise an inextinguishable feature of our human frailty. Contrary to the approach which focuses upon Calvin's thought and life as a unified, coherent expression of a radically new reformational outlook, therefore, Bouwsma argues that Calvin's life and thought constitute a window into the character of his age which was thoroughly eclectic and marked by significant tensions.

Bouwsma admits that his study is not a biography in the strict sense; he is not interested in tracing the history of Calvin's life, including a consideration of what changes or developments may have taken place in his thought. His is a "portrait," an attempt to capture the abiding character of Calvin's thought throughout the whole of his life. Neither does he intend it to be a psychological study. Though Bouwsma considers aspects of Calvin's personality and psyche, he wants to describe Calvin wholistically. Most significantly, he endeavours to portray Calvin *as a representative figure of his times*. His "portrait" of Calvin is as much a portrait of Calvin's world as it is of the man himself.

The outline of Bouwsma's study betrays the major thesis of his portrait. He begins with a treatment of Calvin and his times (chapters 1-3), and argues that Calvin reflected within himself the particular tensions and anxieties that marked the late Medieval, early Reformation period. He then proceeds to describe the threat of the past inheritance which was Calvin's in Medieval Scholasticism under the heading of the "labyrinth" (chapters 4-6). In the next chapter Bouwsma treats Calvin's substantial indebtedness to Renaissance humanism which provided him an "opening" to free him from the constraints of his Medieval inheritance (chapter 7). The remainder of his portrait develops the significance of this humanism for a number of important aspects of Calvin's thought and life under the heading of the "abyss" (chapters 8-11). The last portion of the study considers the application of Calvin's thought to the practical program in Geneva (chapters 12-14).

In his discussion of Calvin and his times, Bouwsma maintains that Calvin peculiarly expressed the tensions and anxieties of his historical period. Like the times in which he lived Calvin was a "singularly anxious man and, as a reformer, fearful and troubled" (32).

Calvin's anxiety provides the key for identifying "two opposing impulses" in his thought. On the one hand Calvin was particularly disturbed by the "abyss" of chaos and disorder and insisted upon "cultural constructions, boundary systems, and patterns of control that might help him to recover his sense of direction" (48). This side of Calvin accounts for the profoundly traditional and conservative quality of his thought. But on the other hand, Calvin sought liberation from human constructions, systems and patterns of thought in order that he might escape the "labyrinth" which the effects of the papal church and late Medieval culture represented. The first side of Calvin Bouwsma identifies with Calvin's fear of the "abyss"; the second side of Calvin he identifies with his fear of the "labyrinth." By virtue of the former Calvin feared the unknown and uncontrollable future; by virtue of the latter he feared equally enslavement to the sins of the past. The first side of Calvin mirrors late Medieval Scholasticism; the second side of Calvin mirrors Renaissance humanism.

With respect to Calvin's fear of the "abyss," expressing the conservative and traditional side of his person, Bouwsma notes first of all, Calvin's indebtedness to late Medieval views. For example, Calvin shared with the Medievals a confidence in the possibility of cosmological reform. He affirmed their confidence in mankind's ability to know the truth, as well as their doctrine of natural law and the necessity of subjecting all things to their proper order and boundary. Calvin even fell prey at times to the "moralism" that characterized Medieval thought and practice, because of his desire to maintain order and to insist upon conformity to the dictates of law. In these respects Calvin inherited much from the culture and thought of the Medieval period and he utilized his inheritance to ameliorate, though largely unsuccessfully, his fear of the abyss of chaos and radical change

which accompanied the Reformation.

Contrary to this conservative and, as Bouwsma sometimes terms it, "philosophical" impulse, Calvin found an "opening" to the future in his humanism. This humanist impulse in Calvin provided him an escape from the "labyrinth" of bondage to the past and its inheritances. Bouwsma identifies a number of characteristic features of humanism in Calvin's thought, chief among them his emphasis upon rhetoric. The humanists rejected Scholastic education with its primary dependence upon logic and preferred the art of persuasion or rhetoric. Rhetoric, with its capacity to inspire and to persuade, was an instrument better equipped to accomplish their goal of freedom from the claims of order and cultural conformity. Calvin embraced this humanist view of rhetoric and preferred the art of persuasion to the "cold chop logic" of the schoolmen. He also adopted the humanist's approach to the interpretation of historical texts and employed it to good effect in his commentaries on the Scripture. As a humanist Calvin was not only prepared to acknowledge ambiguities and discrepancies in Scripture, but would also have found "the notion of biblical inerrancy" to be the product of "wilful ignorance" (122). In typically humanist fashion Calvin understood the Scripture to evince an accomodation of God's decorum to human comprehension.

Bouwsma identifies several aspects of Calvin's humanist impulse which are at odds with his Medieval inheritance and impulse. Whereas his Medieval inheritance pushed him in the direction of protecting boundaries and exercising control, his humanist background pushed him toward an escape from this "labyrinth" and "left him precariously poised on the edge of the aybss" (131). In his view of the human being, for example, Calvin's humanism enabled him to overcome the intellectualism which minimized the "heart" and exalted the intellect. It also enabled him to do greater justice than Medieval Scholasticism to the dark side of man's nature as a sinner. Moreover, this humanism tempered Calvin's Medieval confidence in man's ability to know something as it truly "is." Contrary to this optimistic appraisal of human knowledge, Calvin took seriously the paradox of the gospel,

the limits of human knowledge and capacity for systematic reflection, and the "humanness" of all theological labor.

This should be enough to set forth the main lines of Bouwsma's provocative portrait of Calvin. The portrait is of a man who was as deeply *schizophrenic* as the age in which he lived. One Calvin was "a philosopher, a rationalist and a schoolman in the high Scholastic tradition represented by Thomas Aquinas, a man of fixed principles, and a conservative" (230). The other Calvin was "a rhetorician and humanist, a skeptical fideist in the manner of the followers of William of Ockham, flexible to the point of opportunism, and a revolutionary in spite of himself" (231). Bouwsma even ventures to say that, inasmuch as this crisis within Calvin mirrored the crisis of his age, Calvin "was also Everyman" (231).

Though he himself prefers the humanist side of Calvin, Bouwsma argues that this two-sidedness of Calvin's person gave birth to distinct traditions within subsequent Calvinism, each of which could appeal directly and with warrant to Calvin himself. Thus Calvin's progeny include a conservative and orthodox Calvinism, an evangelical pietism and deistic rationalism.

There is much in Bouwsma's study that deserves praise. He effectively challenges too easy assumptions about the coherence of Calvin's thought. He also persuasively points out the many lines of influence which converge in Calvin, whether from late Medieval scholasticism or the Renaissance. No one could do this more knowledgeably than Bouwsma, whose speciality is the history of this period.

And yet this is also the great weakness of Bouwsma's study. It is difficult to avoid the judgment that Bouwsma's portrait of Calvin is more a portrait of Calvin's times. Calvin is a convenient figure in whom to discover those features of the life and thought of this period which Bouwsma considers important. But Calvin's uniqueness is not Bouwsma's interest *and therefore his uniqueness is lost in this portrait*. Though it may be useful to debunk the simplistic view that Calvin's thought was at every point a simple and coherent

reproduction of the teachings of Scripture, Bouwsma's portrait is sketched much too broadly. He allows little room for the integrity and unique contribution of Calvin to our understanding of the Scripture.

For this reason this study is not a helpful one for an understanding of Calvin's theology. It is even seriously wrong in its reading at critical points. For example, Bouwsma maintains that Calvin "saw guilt in creatureliness itself, guilt shared even by human beings created in God's image before the Fall" (42). He also misleadingly states that Calvin "gave little attention to the church as a subject of theological reflection; his program for the church was again thoroughly practical" (214). He also uses the term "labyrinth" to describe the entanglements of the past, though this is not consistent with Calvin's own understanding of "labyrinth" as the consequence of pursuing questions beyond the limits of Scripture. These kinds of assertions could not stand, were Bouwsma to have attended to Calvin's mature expression of his theology in the *Institutes* rather than gleaning references from a variety of his works written throughout his life.

Perhaps most striking, however, is the decidedly "modern" look to Bouwsma's portrait of Calvin. The polarity discovered in Calvin's thought between order and freedom seems more characteristic of the modern era than of the Reformation. Calvin's own argument, set forth in Book III of the *Institutes*, that true freedom is alone found in humble submission to the law as this is enlivened by the Spirit of Christ, is dismissed or remains unacknowledged by Bouwsma. Furthermore, Bouwsma's view of the "anxiety" which pervaded Calvin's times seems peculiarly inconsistent with Calvin's own emphasis upon the "assurance of faith." Such "anxiety" seems more characteristic of a modern world view with its repudiation of all "cosmic inheritances" and its view of the future as open and uncontrolled by anything or anyone who is sovereign over it.

This is a book worth reading. But it must be read critically.

Cornelis P. Venema

Ramism in William Perkin's Theology, by Donald K. McKim. American University Studies. Series vii: Theology and Religion. Vol. 15. New York: Peter Land, 1987. Pp. xii + 249. \$38.90

For many, the names of William Perkins and Peter Ramus are unknown. Yet, both men made significant contributions to Reformation and post-Reformation thinking. Donald McKim has opened up for students of church history an area of study which has not been worked with very much. Although there have been a few books and scholarly articles in English on Ramus--some in the last forty years by Walter Ong--his contribution to Puritan and post-reformation theology has been, until now, virtually unstudied. Material on Perkins is also scarce.

Ramus, a Frenchman, was born two years before Luther nailed his theses to the church door at Wittenberg. Trained in philosophy, he was deeply disturbed by the disorganization of education. He sought a simplified teaching method over against the commonly used Aristotelian method. In 1562, Ramus became a Protestant. After that, until he was martyred for his faith in 1572, he was a leader among the Reformers.

William Perkins (1558-1602) was a Reformer in the English Church. He sought spiritual renewal in the church through an educated preaching clergy. While he was a scholarly man, a lecturer at Cambridge, he was at the same time an able preacher. His preaching style was "plain" so all could understand. His writings, gathered into three volumes, were influential in the Puritan community. One of his treatises, "The Art of Prophesying," was the text-book used in the preparation of ministers.

It is McKim's thesis that Perkins in all his writings and preaching was influenced by the philosophical views of the Huguenot Ramus. Carefully he works through the writings of Perkins and demonstrates the various influences of Ramus. He shows that "Perkins approached his work as a theologian and preacher with the tools of Ramist logic and rhetoric firmly in hand" (116). "Along with many of his

colleagues at Cambridge University who were likewise looking for the reformation and 'purifying' of the spiritual condition of the Church of England, William Perkins found the Ramist philosophy to be excellent as an effective vehicle by which to convey his thought to other people" (117).

Perkins' view of preaching--the "plain style"--was influenced by and built on his understanding of Ramist logic. This style of preaching became the model of preaching for many of the influential Puritans. Ramism contributed the method to Puritan preaching, but Geneva contributed the context. History tells us that the Puritan pulpit was very powerful in England. By means of Ramist logic used in the preparation and presentation of sermons the people were helped to understand the beauties of Scripture and they became scripturally literate.

McKim's work is a valuable addition to Puritan studies. He has done what he set out to do--and he has done it well.

Unfortunately the printing is another matter. Sentences or paragraphs are not completed (141); pages of text are repeated (143 and 144); sometimes footnotes are misnumbered or completely missing in the text. There are also many examples of inadequate proof-reading. This is quite unfortunate since the book is very worthwhile.

Jerome M. Julien

Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins, by Richard A. Muller. Studies in Historical Theology. Vol. 2. Ed. by David C. Steinmetz. Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1986. Paperback edition published 1988 by Baker Book House Company. Pp. 240. \$12.95.

Those who are acquainted with the studies of Richard A. Muller, professor of historical theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, will welcome this Baker Book House paperback edition and printing of his *Christ and the Decree*. Muller is well known for his contribution to the understanding of post-reformation Reformed dogmatics, particularly his critical evaluation of the traditional interpretation that the post-

reformation Reformed dogmaticians materially altered the doctrinal position of the classical reformers.

This edition and printing includes a number of corrections of typographical errors in the text and notes of the first edition, a re-setting of the entire index to overcome a pagination problem of that edition, and an added bibliography of the more important primary and secondary sources. In this respect it is a more useful volume than the original.

Muller begins his study by introducing the problem of interpreting Protestant orthodoxy which has emerged in studies of post-reformation dogmatics. In these studies the critical question that has surfaced again and again concerns the degree of continuity or discontinuity between the theology of Calvin and his successors. Did Calvin's successors reproduce his doctrine or did they substantially alter it by constructing a system of doctrine centered upon and controlled by the doctrine of predestination to the detriment of other aspects of his teaching?

A key figure in the shaping of a consensus on this question was the historian of doctrine, Alexander Schweitzer, a pupil of Schleiermacher, who argued in his *Die protestantischen Centraldogmen* that the orthodox Reformed theologians "attempted to build a synthetic, deductive, and therefore irrefutable system of theology upon the primary proposition of an absolute divine decree of predestination" (1). For Schweizer and many other interpreters, chief among them being Ferdinand Christian Baur and Wilhelm Gass, this development was a consistent development of the seminal insights of Calvin and represented a laudatory movement in the direction of a consistent explication and realization of "an inner principle," namely, the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty expressed in terms of the decree of predestination. For other interpreters such as Heinrich Heppe, this development represented a modification of Calvin's viewpoint in which the doctrine of predestination was placed in an *a priori* position in the *locus de Deo* before the doctrine of creation and redemption. According to Heppe, Beza's *Tabula praedestinationis* constitutes the source of this shift and the standard for the orthodox theologies of the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In these theologies predestination as an expression of the principle of divine sovereignty becomes the central dogma from which all other dogmatic principles are deduced.

In more recent scholarship, however, a reappraisal has taken place which calls into question the presumed continuity between the theology of Calvin and of later Calvinism on the doctrine of the decree. Though this scholarship generally concurs with the consensus of nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarship that orthodoxy developed a predestinarian metaphysic and system, it questions whether this was in substantial continuity with the theology of Calvin. The understanding of predestination as a central dogma is not ascribed to Calvin or even to Zwingli, but to Calvin's successors, particularly Beza. Beza and others who followed his lead engineered a one-sided alteration of the Reformed system by replacing its original christocentrism with a predestinarian or "metaphysically determined structure." The studies of Jacobs, Niesel and Locher in the theologies of Calvin and Zwingli argue that the pattern of later Reformed orthodoxy was inconsistent with the christocentric and soteriological interest that dominates Calvin's treatment of predestination and election. Rather than being a consistent outworking of a central principle present already in the writings of the early Reformers, as was the understanding of the earlier scholarship of Schweizer *et al.*, this "orthodoxy" materially altered the doctrine of predestination by making it a central organizing principle expressive of the absolute sovereignty of God.

Muller's study is an attempt to resolve this divergence of interpretation by addressing the question of the *continuity* of emphasis between the theology of Calvin and his late sixteenth and early seventeenth century epigoni. His thesis is that there is a genuine continuity of doctrinal emphasis between Calvin and the post-reformation Calvinists, a continuity of emphasis upon predestination as the guarantee of salvation *sola gratia*. In this respect the older scholarship was correct in arguing for a continuous development of Reformed theology from Calvin onward, though this

continuity was overstated in terms of the "central dogma" concept. Yet Muller also argues that, within this fundamental doctrinal consensus upon predestination as the guarantee of salvation *sola gratia*, the later Reformed orthodox developed a "system" of doctrine characterized by greater formalization and precision in definition than was true of the early Reformers. In brief, Muller argues that the difference between Calvin and the "orthodox" was more a matter of theological method and form than of doctrinal substance or matter.

This is the burden of Muller's tracing of the understanding of the decree of predestination in its first codification by Calvin and the classical Reformers and then in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. He discovers, consistent with the suggestion of the historic-dogmatic analyses in Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, that these early "orthodox" theologians retained Calvin's christocentric and soteriological interest in predestination, while adopting a doctrinal structure more formal in definition and more scholastic in method.

Thus, there are two *foci* to Muller's study. First, he seeks to show how in the development of Reformed theology there was an emphasis upon the continuity between God's saving will and its effects in the temporal order and thus upon the consequent unity of the entire soteriological structure. In this development "predestination does not oppose Christology nor does it reduce Christology to a mere function of the divine will, a means of effecting an already decreed salvation" (10). Second, he argues that the "scholasticism" of the "orthodox" was characterized by precision of definition through the analysis of the doctrinal *loci* in terms of Scripture, previous definition (the tradition), and contemporary debate. In this respect it was formally comparable to the medieval school-theology and represented an *inevitable* codification of the original insights of the Reformation. This developing scholasticism of form cannot be simplistically ascribed to the baneful influence of Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, but reflects the real connection of the Reformed theological tradition to the western and medieval

theological tradition which provided its larger context.

The outline of Muller's study is as follows. He begins in part I with a treatment of Reformed theology in its "first codification." In this part he considers the systems of Calvin, Bullinger, Musculus and Vermigli. In part II he treats the formulation of orthodox system or reformed theology in its second codification. Here he analyzes the theologies of Theodore Beza, Zacharias Ursinus, Jerome Zanchi, Polanus and Perkins.

In his analysis of the "first codification" of Reformed theology, Muller notes that the development of the doctrine of predestination was primarily in a soteriological context. Furthermore, there is no analysis of the divine causality more rigorous in the writings of these early Reformed theologians (Bullinger, Musculus, and Vermigli) than that found in Calvin's *Institutes*. Though some of these theologians, e.g., Vermigli, represent the beginning in Reformed theology of a search for doctrinal system and synthesis in dialogue with the tradition, there is no indication of a substantial departure from the christological structure of Calvin's theology and understanding of predestination. There is certainly no evidence of a theology characterized by systematic deduction from a single principle, the sovereignty of God, and the subordination of the person and work of Christ as Mediator to a mere "means" in the execution of God's saving will.

In a significant departure from many interpretations of the theology of Theodore Beza, Muller also argues that he does not articulate a predestinarian metaphysic and system. The predestinarian structure of his *Tabula praedestinationis* is not followed in either his *Confessio* or his "epitome" of doctrine, the *Quaestionum et responsionum*. Neither of these latter works allows the decree to become the deductive starting point for its articulation of other *loci*. Thus, the argument of many interpreters that Beza developed Reformed orthodoxy in the direction of a thoroughly rationalistic and necessitarian system is overstated. In Muller's terms, "Beza's role in the development of Reformed system may better be described as a generally successful attempt to

clarify and to render more precise the doctrinal definitions he had inherited from Calvin and the other Reformers of the first era of theological codification" (96). The difference between Beza, and other early orthodox theologians such as Ursinus, Zanchi, and Calvin is a matter of degree and not of substance. They are distinct in the development of a mode of presentation which is similar to the school theology of late medieval scholasticism, with its forms of *quaestio*, the *locus*, and the characteristic disputation with alternative views. This is not a "deviation" from Calvin but the employment of a theological form put to the service of the Reformation in the context of polemic with alternative confessional traditions.

The last period of orthodox codification that Muller considers is that of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the theologies of Polanus and Perkins. Here he acknowledges a developed interest in a speculative elaboration of the decree, particularly the relation between the essential acts of God, including the decree, and the Godhead. Nevertheless, the decree has not become in their writings a principle from which a system is wholly deduced, but it is bounded by other concepts, including the Trinity, the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, and the goodness of God. Both Polanus and Perkins are "infralapsarian" in their understanding of the decree and neither place the fall into sin in as positive a relation to God's will as did Calvin. Moreover, they follow consistently the tradition of relating the decree to its ground in the intra-trinitarian determination of the three persons of the Godhead (including the Son who is in this respect the "electing God"). And they elaborate a redemptive-historical view of Christ's person and work as Mediator of the covenant of grace that mitigates against any *a priori* deductivism in theological method or understanding of the relation between eternal decree and temporal outworking. The person and work of Christ are not a mere "means" in the execution of God's will to save. We may say of these theologians, then, what may be said also of the earlier Reformed, that in their view "at the very heart of God, the underlying will to save is defined by the willingness of the Son, himself the God who decrees, to assume the

form of a servant and become the means of salvation" (173).

This summary of the argument of Muller's study is enough, I trust, to whet the appetite of anyone interested in the history of doctrine, especially the history of post-Reformation Reformed doctrine on the the decree of God. Muller's study is thorough and evidences an impressive familiarity with the original and secondary sources. He challenges the simplistic assumptions, often operative in scholarship, that the post-Reformation "orthodox" were villains who radically altered and distorted the doctrine of Calvin. In my judgment, he demonstrates the untenability of the Schweitzer thesis that the "orthodox," at least in this period of codification, developed a predestinarian metaphysic and deductivistic theological structure. Highly recommended!

Cornelis P. Venema

The Providence of God, by Benjamin Wirt Farley. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. Pp. 264. \$16.95.

In his preface to this study, Farley indicates that it was written to fill a void in the literature; no one to his knowledge had written a comprehensive survey of the doctrine of providence in Western theology. Farley intends the present book to be such a survey of the doctrine of providence. He also notes in his preface that his study was written from a self-consciously Reformed standpoint. Consequently, his survey is an historico-theological investigation of the development of a biblical and Reformed view of the providence of God.

Farley begins his study with an introductory chapter on the definition and theological *locus* of the doctrine of providence. He then summarizes the traditional Reformed position and its biblical foundations. The remainder of his study traces the history of the doctrine of providence, from the early Greek and Roman philosophical heritage as his *terminus a quo* to the challenge of contemporary process theology as his *terminus ad quem*. He concludes with a statement of what he terms the "quintessential features of a Reformed perspective."

The usefulness of this volume lies in its historical survey of the development of the doctrine of providence, particularly the influence of early Greek and Stoic formulations upon the understanding of providence in Western theology. Farley covers a great deal of material (sometimes too quickly and summarily) and provides the historian of theology with a helpful reference for tracing the development of this doctrine and the influence of extra-biblical views upon the formulations of the Western theologians, including the Reformers. He also fills a genuine gap in the literature with his consideration of the scientific and philosophical perspectives of the modern era in terms of their significance for a formulation of this doctrine. Process theology, which addresses these perspectives directly and poses a specific challenge to any orthodox formulation of the doctrine of providence, is carefully outlined and evaluated. For those wishing an introductory survey of the history of the doctrine of Western theology, Farley's study is to be recommended.

However, because Farley endeavors to integrate his historical survey with a Reformed theological articulation of the doctrine of providence, he tends to seek parallels and contributions to a Reformed view in the various positions he considers. This leads at times to an overly facile approval of perspectives on providence that are fundamentally at odds with a Reformed, biblical confession. For example, in his effort to find useful elements in Rudolph Bultmann's view of God's action in history, he concludes that "in the final analysis. . .it is not so much that Bultmann is wrong, but, as Ogden suggests, it is rather that his hermeneutic is one-sided" (p. 207). One can appreciate Farley's desire to be fair and irenic, but this kind of attempt to embrace the contributions of a wide variety of theological and philosophical perspectives is eclectic at best and contradictory at worst. This same interest in finding common ground with alternative views also leads him to remark that "it is possible to endorse many process affirmations--so long as God's sovereignty is not compromised" (p. 228). Again, it is not likely that process theology can be so easily adapted to a Reformed viewpoint by simply adding an emphasis upon God's sovereignty, when this is absent from the fundamentals of

process theology and is integral to any biblical statement of the doctrine of providence.

Furthermore, there are some troubling aspects to Farley's articulation of a Reformed perspective on God's providence. While he makes a number of statements that are unobjectionable and even helpful to any formulation of the doctrine, he also leaves the reader with some unanswered questions. One of these has to do with the relation between the biblical text and its teaching about God's providence and the formulations of philosophy. Farley frequently suggests that these may mutually benefit one another, but he does not address the issue of the extent to which many of the philosophical perspectives discussed are rooted in an unbiblical world view. He also speaks somewhat vaguely, following the precedent of Barth and Brunner, of the need to develop a doctrine of providence from the foundational perspective of God's grace in election. Yet, he does not articulate a clear doctrine of election nor does he show how this would affect a Reformed view of providence. Finally, he argues for what he terms a "soft determinism," namely, that God is the final ground and cause of all things, though without obliterating the agency and freedom of creaturely entities. The reader is left wondering, however, whether the freedom of the creature so limits the sovereignty of the Creator that the affirmation of the latter is rendered suspect.

This is a study which is useful from a historical viewpoint. Its theological usefulness, however, is limited.

Cornelis P. Venema

Philosophy of Religion, by Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. Pp. 402, including indexes. \$18.95.

In this substantially revised edition of Geisler's earlier volume on the philosophy of religion, Geisler and Corduan present a comprehensive survey of the key questions addressed and the classical answers given to them in historic and contemporary philosophy of religion. The second edition differs from the first in several respects. The text and

bibliographies have been updated; some of the arguments presented have been clarified or refined; and the chapters are introduced with a brief synopsis of guiding questions and recommended collateral reading. The glossary and bibliography are also expanded.

Noting that the discipline of the philosophy of religion has enjoyed a renaissance in contemporary thought, Geisler and Corduan identify four pressing questions which have become prominent. These questions are: Is there any basis in reality for religious experience? Is there any basis in reason for belief in God? Is it even possible to speak meaningfully of a transcendent Being? And how does one account for evil in view of the claim that God is good and omnipotent? These four questions constitute the four parts of their study. In each part the question is identified and the classical and contemporary attempts to resolve the question are summarized.

Though it is neither possible nor desirable to provide here a synopsis of Geisler and Corduan's treatment of these questions, it should be observed that they write from the standpoint of an apologetic which appeals to evidence and rational arguments for both the vindication and defense of Christian theism. They adopt the traditional view of philosophy of religion, namely, that it is that theoretical discipline which addresses religious questions from a "philosophical" standpoint. One of the glaring omissions in this present volume is their neglect to provide a defense of the legitimacy and nature of the discipline and the approach adopted.

It is evident, however, from Geisler's writings (e.g., his *Christian Apologetics* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976]) that he is confident that an adequate test for the truth of a world view, including the world view of Christian theism, can be found in the criteria of logical consistency, systematic coherence, and empirical adequacy. The world view of evangelical Christian theism is, according to Geisler, capable of meeting these criteria in a unique way and thereby warrants acceptance as the most *probable* view. His apologetic is, therefore, one which makes its appeal finally to evidence and reasons which count for evangelical Christian theism and against alternative world views.

This apologetic undergirds the present volume. Thus its evident usefulness as a synopsis of the classical and contemporary discussions in philosophy of religion is attenuated by its acceptance of an evidentialist-rationalist apologetic. Geisler and Corduan nowhere address the problems that this kind of an apologetic creates when it elevates "evidence" and "reasons" to the status of having final authority to arbitrate truth claims or when it presumes that man is a fairly objective seeker after the truth.

Cornelis P. Venema

Completely Pro-Life: Building a Consistent Stance, by Ronald J. Sider. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Pp. 240, incl. bibliography and index. \$7.95.

Jay Kesler's comment on the backside of this paperback is, albeit with an altogether different slant, quite accurate: "Ron Sider has a way of getting under our skin."

If, as Stephen Monsma's endorsement claims, this book offers "a broader, more principled perspective" to guide evangelical political involvement, those siding with Sider will likely be irritated with their irredeemable, perpetual social guilt, while the others will probably be irritated by what they see as a dense cloud of rhetorical, sociological and economic smog emitted by so many unexamined assumptions and so much vague terminology.

In this book Sider takes the anti-abortion, pro-life position for a spin, driving the argument down the country lanes of political-sociological analysis. Its chassis is the equation: life = *shalom* (peace). Wrapped in Cardinal Bernardin's "seamless garment," Sider glides along pointing out the unibody construction of an allegedly *consistent* pro-life (i.e., *shalom*-creating) pursuit of economic and political justice. Unibody pro-lifers of this kind have no sympathy for either abortion, tobacco subsidies, South African apartheid, nuclear deterrence, the National Rifle Association, or President and Mrs. Marcos.

After all, "Don't handguns and poverty obliterate precious human beings as surely as abortion?" *Shalom*, you see,

is as wide as life. Like Sider's argument, it occupies the whole road as *everything* affecting life becomes morally equivalent.

But *shalom* Sider-style is silliness. "Regardless of race, sex, age and religion," he insists, "all persons should have equal opportunity to participate in the economy" (85,87). Coming to mind immediately are two classes of people of whom this is patently silly: children and criminals. Then there's this obnoxious claim: "The biblical teaching that God is opposed to extremes of wealth and poverty would seem to favor progressive taxes [whereby the rich pay proportionately more taxes] on income and wealth" (95). Because the problems are defined in economic terms, according to marxist-socialist categories of analysis, their solutions are likewise economic. The cornerstone of Sider-style economic *shalom* is redistribution of wealth through taxation of the wealthy. This primary means of equalization between rich(er) and poor(er) is necessary to empower the poor and to discourage extremes of wealth and poverty.

But this kind of *shalom* lacks the direction provided by genuinely biblical balance. Because he has failed to machine the linchpins of his vision carefully--namely, justice and poverty--Sider has left us a careening, swerving mass of argument welded dangerously onto a thin drive shaft called "pro-life."

Take the matter of poverty. God, Sider says, hates the extremes of wealth and poverty. In some basic sense God is on the side of the poor, and in a sense, God is not on the side of the rich.

Acknowledging that some poverty results from laziness, from sinful choices about drugs or alcohol, and from wrong religion, Sider suggests that all of these must be solved through evangelism, repentance and conversion. Most poverty, however, is attributed in Scripture to oppression by the rich, and this is solved not by evangelism, repentance and conversion (since Sider seems to have no real *gospel* for the rich, only judgment), but by government redistribution of resources. "Sinful, selfish [rich] people cannot be trusted

to use great economic power for the common good rather than for themselves" (78). Of course, Sider admits that not all income differences result from sin, selfishness and greed. No: the *creation* of wealth may be good, but the *retention* of wealth is evil.

And then that other linchpin: justice. As the agent of Sider's justice, the government is assigned to redistribute economic power and resources within the private sector (86) and to guarantee equality of economic opportunity.

But there's at least one problem here: justice is supposed to be blind, yet Scripture clearly distinguishes between "undeserving poor" and "deserving poor," including among the latter those *whose poverty is divine judgment* upon their sin and impenitence. In contrast to Sider's justice, Scripture's does not require the relative equalization of wealth or of opportunity to obtain wealth, but demands dealing with all persons according to God's law for persons and property. Sider continues to employ what David Chilton has called "Robin Hood Theology" where "loving my poor neighbor means robbing my rich neighbor" (found in his smashing reply to Sider's earlier piece, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, entitled *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators* [Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1981], 35). It is a sad irony that those whom Sider wants to defend have been hurt the most by government programs seeking to ensure a minimum wage and to provide an economic safety net through welfare.

Some will applaud the book's conclusions about contraceptives and abortions for minors, about publicly funded day care, the educational voucher system, smoking, and alcohol abuse. Some will decry its commendations regarding unilateral initiatives in nuclear disarmament. Some will be bored by its tired, Democratic, biblically unsupported notions about racism and affirmative action. Indeed, if you read it, this book will, in one way or the other, get under your skin.

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Wisdom and Humanness in Psychology, by C. Stephen Evans. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1989. Pp. 161, incl. bibliography and index. \$8.95.

Wisdom and Humanness presents a philosophy of the science of psychology by a frankly Christian author. C. Stephen Evans has taught psychology at Wheaton College and is presently teaching philosophy at St. Olaf College. In this book Mr. Evans shows himself to be well-versed and at home in both of these disciplines. His work on the subject is well done, and both he and the Fuller Graduate School of Psychology, where the contents of this volume were given as a series of lectures in January 1988, are to be commended for making these lectures available in book form.

The purpose of this book is to present the possibility and argue for the development of a specifically Christian psychology. Dr. Evans correctly points out that most Christians in the field of psychology have operated on Thomistic, or even Averroist, principles. That is, they have looked at psychology as one road to understanding human experience, viewing Christianity as giving separate but complementary information, but without really attempting to combine the two principally, as in Thomism. Or they have actually seen these two ways of viewing humanity as antithetical and thus to be kept at arm's length from each other, as in Averroism.

Evans himself opts for doing a psychology in the Augustinian tradition, seeking to do scientific labor from a Christian perspective. In this way Evans places himself in the Reformed tradition of thinking and his book will be useful for those interested in a Reformed approach not only to psychology, but to any science.

In defining his position, Evans is careful not to accept the unbeliever's definition of "science" as a so-called neutral study of unrelated facts, as in most modern "empiricism," and chooses instead the idea of a study which 1) makes knowledge, or at least an approach to knowledge, possible, and 2) permits scientific claims (that is, claims to knowledge) to be revised. Under this definition a truly scientific and Christian psychology is possible.

In moving toward the goal of a Christian psychology, he presents a cogent description of three "faces" of psychology, of three ways in which psychology works. These faces of psychology are the empirical, the interpretive, and the critical. All of these are necessary to psychology. But Evans is very pointed in showing that by failing to take meaning, value and freedom seriously, humanist psychology has failed to operate honestly or productively as a science. His discussions constitute a valuable contribution to the philosophy of psychology, and to the science of psychology itself.

In the chapter on taking freedom seriously in psychology Reformed Christians are challenged to keep their theological wits about them. Classic Calvinism does indeed believe in the free agency of man, as does Evans, but the Calvinist places this free agency not alongside the determining factors in man's makeup, but together with them. In our opinion, Evans makes the Arminian mistake of failing to see that both man and God can be and are active in the same acts of the human will (cf. particularly Acts 2:23; Phil. 2:12-13). The Arminian places the will of man and the will of God as equals over against each other in the question of freedom of choice, whereas a Calvinist places man's will inside of and under that of God in his conception of human choice. This does not mean that Evan's discussion in this chapter is without value, but we do not see, as he does, an essential conflict between the sovereignty of God and the free agency of man under that sovereignty. Discussions of this particular subject in the third volume of the *Collected Writings of John Murray*, and in the twelfth chapter of R.J. Rushdoony's *By What Standard?* are helpful in seeing this question from a biblical point of view.

In summary, we find *Wisdom and Humanness in Psychology* to be a competent study on one of the fundamental questions facing Christians today, the integration of faith and science. As a worthwhile book for psychologists of any stripe, as well as for Christians who are involved in counseling or ministerial studies, we highly recommend it for psychology courses in Christian colleges and universities.

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