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BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Craig D. Allert, *A High View of Scripture? The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Pp. 203. $18.99.

Within the orbit of evangelicalism in North America, there continues to be a considerable debate regarding the doctrine of Scripture. Even though the Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics might be viewed as consensus documents that settled the controversy in the 1970s regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture (cf. Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible*), able evangelical scholars continue to wrestle with the subject of Scripture. In the contemporary discussions, the center of gravity has shifted from a focus on inspiration and inerrancy, to a focus on biblical hermeneutics and a more historical view of the production of the canon of the Old and New Testaments. One important dimension of this shift is the re-consideration of the relationship between the authority of the canonical Scriptures and the role of the church in recognizing that authority. For some evangelical scholars, the older evangelical view of Scripture was often distorted by the absence of a fully-developed ecclesiology. In the typical evangelical approach to Scripture, the history of the formation and recognition of the canon, accordingly, was often given short shrift.

Allert's study of the authority of the Bible and the formation of the New Testament canon illustrates this shift in focus and renewed attention to the historical circumstances that were the occasion for the church's acknowledgment of the New Testament canon. Allert does not intend to provide so much a history of the formation of the canon as he intends to reflect upon the significance of this history for the doctrine of Scripture. In Allert's judgment, one of the principal problems of the traditional evangelical doctrine is that it does not attend to this history, and virtually treats the New Testament canon as though it "dropped from heaven," complete and ready to be received as such by the Christian church. In the older view, little attention is given to the fluidity of the early church's use of a variety of writings, some of which were not ultimately included in the recognized canon. To use an analogy of Allert's: this view treated the formation of the canon as though it amounted to little more than the collection of an already existing and acknowledged body of writings into a three-ring binder. On this approach, the Scriptures have been played off against church "tradition" in a manner that does not adequately recognize that, in important respects, the Scriptures

belong to this tradition as it developed and stabilized in the context of the controversies and debates of the early centuries of the Christian era. Furthermore, when it comes to the difficult challenges of Scriptural interpretation, we need to recognize the role of "ecclesial canons" that emerged within the church "in which the Bible grew" (175).

In this volume, Allert offers a clear and useful portrait of the history of the formation of the canon. He also makes a good case for considering carefully the way the canon emerged in the early church and the significance of this emergence for a proper understanding of the authority of Scripture. However, he is not as clear or helpful in addressing the crucial theological question of the *basis* for the church's acknowledgment of the canon. It may well be true that in the history of the formation of the canon, the church played a decisive role. Even the *Belgic Confession* in the context of affirming the "self-attesting" authority of the biblical canon, speaks of the role of the church in "receiving" and "approving" the canonical writings. But it does not ascribe to the church a "constitutive" role in the formation of the canon, as though the church "authored" and ultimately "authenticates" the canon as the Word of God. To do so would be tantamount to substituting the church as the real canonical authority for the canonical Scriptures that God has authored and provided for the church's benefit. Therefore, while Allert's volume makes a contribution to a full doctrine of Scripture, it leaves some theological threads rather loosely intertwined.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Wallace M. Alston Jr. and Michael Welker, editors, *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity II: Biblical Interpretation in the Reformed Tradition.* Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007. Pp. xi + 457. $50.00.

This volume is the second in a series that offers a collection of essays on a particular subject by representative Reformed scholars. The Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton Theological Seminary sponsored a second international conference of Reformed theologians in Stellenbosch, South Africa, on March 30−April 3, 2001. The focus of the conference was the role of the Reformed confessions and theological tradition in the reading and interpretation of Scripture. The twenty-nine chapters in this volume are written by biblical and systematic theologians who represent a broad spectrum of the Reformed churches in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

As is unavoidable in a collection of essays such as this, the quality and usefulness of the contributions vary considerably. The topics of these chapters range widely, from a chapter that offers a feminist and contextualized reading of "Tamar's Cry" in 2 Samuel 13 to one on "Ezekiel through the Spectacles of Faith" to one on "Peacemaking and Humanitarian Intervention." Though the thread that is supposed to tie these various chapters together is the topic of Reformed confessional identity and its implications for the interpretation of Scripture, these examples alone are enough to illustrate that this thread is rather thin indeed. Only

Patrick D. Miller's chapter, "Old Testament Exegesis in the Reformed Perspective: The Case of the Commandments," lives up fully to the book's billing by offering a substantial essay on the interpretation of the Decalogue in the Reformed tradition.

The value of this volume lies in its testimony to the present state of the "mainline" Reformed churches and their theological commitments and tendencies. It is ironic that no list of contributors is supplied the reader that would locate the authors in terms of their denominational, national and professional identities. Since the burden of most of the authors is that the interpretation of Scripture is substantially determined by such "contextual" factors, information regarding the authors' identities would assist the reader in the evaluation of their contributions. One characteristic trait of the authors of this volume can be detected rather easily upon reading their contributions: they are by and large not representative of Reformed churches whose identity is formed by any kind of "orthodox" or "traditional" kind of confessional commitment. The confessional identity of these authors is only a loose association with broad themes that have been sounded throughout the history of the Reformed churches. Not one of the authors represents the kind of confessional fidelity that was historically a hallmark of the Reformed churches. Therefore, it is not surprising to discover that the interpretation of Scripture is, in the view of many of the volume's contributors, largely shaped by the context of contemporary readers. Within the framework of the kind of mainline Reformed Christianity that these authors advocate, the traditional Reformed idea of the "literal sense" (*sensus literalis*) of the biblical text is regarded as passé. In a "post-modern" world, which grants considerable weight to the influence of historical, cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other factors in the interpretive enterprise, the interpretation of biblical texts cannot even approximate their meaning in terms of the author's intention. The interpretive enterprise says more about the reader of the text than it does about the meaning of the text itself.

For a book of essays that purports to address the subject of the relation between a confessional Reformed identity and the interpretation of the Bible, this volume is most disappointing. At no point in the volume is the reader offered a clear definition of what it means to be "confessionally" Reformed. If these essays fairly represent the present state of mainline Reformed theological scholarship, the prospects for a bright future for these churches, whether theologically or otherwise, seems rather dim.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*, 2nd edition. Encountering Biblical Studies, Walter A. Elwell, general editor. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 526. $49.99 (cloth).

This volume represents an updating of the 1999 first edition of *Encountering the Old Testament.* It is part of a series produced by Baker Academic, "Encountering Biblical Studies," which series includes vol-

umes that deal with primary sources for the world and environments of both the Old and New Testament. Individual books in this series take a survey look at Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, Romans, and Hebrews. Bill T. Arnold is professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages at Asbury Theological Seminary, and Bryan E. Beyer is professor of Old Testament at Columbia International University Seminary and School of Missions.

The volume under review includes an interactive CD-ROM with it, which includes video clips of interviews with the authors, video clips of biblical lands, still photos of biblical lands, maps, interactive questions, and visual organizers. The authors encourage readers to obtain two other supplemental works, namely, an instructor's resource manual with test items and a collection of primary source readings that deal with the world of the Old Testament. In this way the authors have been very serviceable to those who may use this fine volume as a textbook that surveys the Old Testament.

After two brief essays ("What is the Old Testament and Why Study It?" and "Where and When did the Events of the Old Testament Take Place?"), the volume is divided into four main parts, in which the authors help us to encounter the Pentateuch, the historical books, the poetical books, and the prophets. Thus they follow the canonical order of the English Bible and not that of the Hebrew Bible itself. A brief (and very helpful) epilogue concludes the book's material proper. Arnold and Beyer also include a very useful glossary, endnotes to the chapters, and the indices (subject, Scripture, and name). The glossary as well as the other notes and indices make this a very beneficial volume for students of the Old Testament who may not be as conversant in these studies as the more advanced scholar.

The layout of this volume includes the following features. Each chapter begins with an outline of the chapter as well as the objectives of the chapter itself. Within the chapters there are colorful pictures, charts, and sidebars that focus on key places, key names, and key terms. Chapters conclude with a summary of the chapter, study questions, and annotated suggestions for further reading. In this way, the serious student, with open Bible at hand, could very well use this volume on his or her own to work through the Bible in a self-study way, using this volume as a helpful tool.

The theological stance of the writers is clearly and unapologetically conservative and evangelical ("broadly evangelical," to use their words; p. 15). But the book is not polemical or combative to defend this approach. This results then in discussions about book dating, authorship, and interpretation in which several viewpoints are mentioned, including nearly all those that have been proposed in the evangelical tradition of scholarship. Other more liberal or historically-critical views will be noted as well, but the authors then set forth, in brief, some refutation of the more critical stances, followed by a defense of the mainstream evangelical position (or positions) on these questions.

To illustrate this, Arnold and Beyer discuss the book of Isaiah in two chapters (Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66). Yet this does not mean that they advocate multiple-authorship for the book. Rather, they set forth the

standard arguments for multiple-authors and the arguments for one author (370-372). The arguments are succinctly stated. They conclude the discussion by writing that the "… cumulative evidence suggests the one-author view has much to commend it. The time span of the book and issues of subject matter, vocabulary, and style do not present difficulties if we allow God to reveal the future to his prophets and if we grant that one author can write in more than one style. Textual evidence and the witness of the New Testament writers also appear to support the one-author view. Bible scholars no doubt will continue to study and debate this issue" (372).

The eschatological position of the authors appears to tip toward premillennialism, but, again to be fair to them, they are not strident in advocacy for this viewpoint. This comes through in the very brief discussion of the Gog and Magog chapters in Ezekiel 38-39. They note that scholars "disagree" (422) over the meaning of the terms. Regarding the new temple (Ezek. 40:1 – 48:35) section of Ezekiel, the writers note that evangelicals have "long discussed the meaning and interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48. Indeed, these chapters present some of the greatest challenges facing Old Testament interpreters" (422). After surveying the chapters, Arnold and Beyer then note the possible interpretations that have been set forth in the history of evangelical commentary. They conclude their discussion by saying that whichever view one might embrace and adopt, "we should come away expectant. God is planning an exciting future! He will restore his people and gather them to himself. He will be their God and they will be his people…" (426).

The discussion of Daniel is also helpful in setting forth the main points of apocalyptic literature (as a genre) in general as well as Daniel in particular. Arnold and Beyer are aware, of course, that some scholars see Daniel as a prophecy that is *vaticinium ex eventu* (thus late in its written composition), yet their own stance is that Daniel is truly predictive prophecy. Recent research has allowed us to make more precise explanations of the historical questions that have been raised in historical-critical circles. The authors conclude the following: "… it is clear the ancient author understood the historical situation much more clearly than some thought previously. Although some historical difficulties remain in the book, the author of Daniel was not confused about historical events, as modern scholars often suggest. We should give credit to the ancient author and suspend judgment on any remaining apparent inconsistencies that may be due merely to our lack of available supporting data" (436).

That Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (cf. Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39-47) is an important topic that is not neglected in this "Christian survey" of Old Testament text. This reviewer is appreciative of this aspect of Arnold and Beyer's work since the Christ of the New Testament pages is clearly revealed dressed in the message of the Old Testament (see, for example, the discussions of Isaiah 53 and Amos 9 on pages 375, 376, and page 449, respectively).

The strength of the book is its comprehensiveness. But this is also something of a weakness: by not going into much depth in many subject

areas, it is somewhat frustrating to the reader who is looking for something beyond survey. Having said that, survey is what it means, and this book is not trying to provide extended or technical discussions on the vast number of questions that arise in Old Testament studies. With that notation in mind, this reviewer recommends this very attractive book to readers. This book would serve as an excellent introduction to the entire Old Testament to college students who were serious about learning the survey of that Testament. The authors self-consciously have targeted undergraduate students (15), but they note that the first edition has been helpful to graduate and seminary students. Pastors and interested laypeople will use this book with great profit.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Prayer: What Jesus Teaches Us*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2008. Pp. 255. $14.99.

In what sounds somewhat like a sequel to his *The Heart of Evangelism* published in 2001, Jerram Barrs, professor of Christianity and contemporary culture and resident scholar of the Francis Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, seeks to probe the heart of prayer in his latest book, focusing specifically on what Jesus teaches us about prayer. The bulk of the book is devoted to treatments of Luke 11 and Matthew 6, as well as to Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17.

Barrs begins with openly honest acknowledgement about the difficulty most, if not, all of us have with the discipline of prayer, admitting that "we are not very spiritual people, that we do not find prayer easy, and that our prayer life is not strong" (11). Not only does this honest admission set an appropriate tone at the start, it is refreshing that Barrs never moves away from the reality of how challenging it is for us to be faithful in prayer. He avoids setting forth secret prayer formulas that will help us "break through" the difficulty and struggle we have in prayer, setting us soaring to new heights. Instead of taking such an approach all too common these days, an approach which he rightly notes often leaves one feeling more worthless and hopeless than before, he focuses on Jesus' teaching on prayer, instruction that according to Barrs produces a sense of "solace and support" rather than "condemnation and rebuke" (12).

He understandably begins his consideration of Jesus' teaching on prayer with what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, examining first Jesus' instruction to his disciples in Luke 11:2-4. Like others, Barrs identifies the features of this prayer, noting its brevity, simplicity, plainness, and confident tone. Barrs is obviously not the first to detect these characteristics, but he does add his own valuable insights and an array of questions that challenge our attitudes and assumptions about the nature of prayer. In addition, he supplies the reader with an important reminder that, in the end, God hears our prayers because of his love for us in Christ, not because we pray prayers that someone else may regard as 'spiritual'" (17).

In surveying the remainder of the book, Barrs spends a mere thirteen pages on the particular content of the Lord's Prayer in chapter 2, briefly considering each petition before directing his attention in chapter 3 to the words that immediately follow the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:5-13. Barrs is to be commended for his sensitivity to the broader context of Luke 11 and for treating verses that might otherwise be overlooked in examining Jesus' teaching on prayer.

Barrs is also sensitive to the different context in which the Lord's Prayer is found in Matthew's Gospel, which he considers next by addressing the broader issues of public and private prayer and our "personal acts of devotion". After a treatment of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness that spans two chapters, Barrs concludes the book with four chapters exploring and explaining the implications of Jesus' prayer recorded in John 17. Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection and discussion, making the book suitable to study groups. Finally, the book concludes with additional material included in three appendices: the first on mysticism and prayer; the second on the "extra words" in the Lord's Prayer; and the third on posture in prayer.

The last two chapters in the book dealing with John 17 contain some of the best material in the book. In these chapters, Barrs first examines how Jesus' prayer for his people can help us identify what ought to serve as priorities in our own lives and prayers, and then challenges the church to take seriously Jesus' prayer for unity. He maintains that Jesus "does not want [unity] to remain merely an interesting idea for us to think about" nor "to consider [unity] as a possible addition to the Christian life" (203). Insofar as this unity is in order that the world may know that Jesus is sent from the Father (see John 17:21, 23), the church must be challenged to answer the call instead of, as Barrs rightly observes, immediately feeling "the need to make qualifications, rather than wrestling with what Jesus has to say … [trying] to identify the people with whom we don't need to be one, rather than getting on with the calling to be one" (198).

While the book follows an identifiable structure, at times it seems to lack or lose focus. For a book taking aim at the heart of prayer, it is questionable why thirty pages in the middle of the book (111-140) address Christ's temptations in the wilderness. His treatment of the temptations is insightful, but he fails to make it plain how the material relates to the heart of prayer. Along these lines, in considering Matthew 6:1-18, he explores secret giving in greater detail than secret praying. Even in the appendix on posture in prayer, it is hard to discern whether Barrs is focusing on posture *in prayer* specifically, or posture more broadly *in worship*.

Again, it is not that the material in these sections of the book is without value; it is simply unclear how it connects and adds to the central concern of the book. Indeed, when one considers that the actual petitions of the Lord's Prayer receive a very brief treatment, the volume could perhaps be improved by leaving out altogether the two chapters on the temptation and replacing them with whole chapters devoted to each petition in the Lord's Prayer, allowing them to be considered in greater detail.

In addition, the book, at points, lacks sufficient depth in its treatment of certain passages. For example, the importance of Jesus' mentioning of the Holy Spirit in Luke 11:13, while noted by Barrs, is not as prominent in the explanation and application of the text as it should be in order to avoid misunderstandings. In not making this crucial observation, one might adopt an approach to God in prayer as one might imagine approaching a genie in a bottle. It is evident that Barrs nowhere endorses such a practice, but rather refutes it. Regrettably, he fails to refute it soundly *from the text*.

This approach may be due to Barrs' intended audience. It seems fair to say that Barrs targets a broad audience, both in terms of the maturity and the theological convictions of his readers, though he stays well within the bounds of evangelicalism. Barrs is not endeavoring to produce a highly scholastic, academic treatise on prayer, but a digestible volume that helps all Christians, regardless of their level of Christian maturity, in their struggle with prayer. The scarcity of footnotes and references supports this. Indeed, the most footnoted part of the book is the appendix on mysticism and prayer, which happens to be a most excellent inclusion and an insightful summary and critique of a pervasive approach to prayer and spirituality today. For this reason, the appendix, though different in tone and depth from a great deal of the rest of the book, should be included in the main body of the work lest anyone fail to give it due attention.

But despite certain weaknesses, Barrs' book is a welcome relief from much of today's drivel commonly offered on the topic of prayer. Barrs is biblically-sensitive, warmly encouraging, and yet consistently challenging. The honesty and humility evident at the beginning of the book pervades the whole. Filled with helpful examples, colorful illustrations, and provoking questions, the book is an encouragement to those of us who don't feel like prayer warriors, and in its simplicity promotes growth in prayer by highlighting both Jesus' instruction and his example. Overall, Barrs' achieves what seems to be his goal: producing a highly readable and biblically-faithful book on prayer, focusing on the teachings of Jesus, that serves to both encourage and challenge all believers.

—Brian Allred

Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*. Edited by John Bolt, translated by Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 304. $39.99 (cloth).

In this collection of essays, readers are exposed not only to Bavinck's neo-Calvinism, wherein he takes up a number of timely subjects pertaining to Christianity and its relationship to the civil sphere of life, they are also shown more generally responsible and intelligent Christian scholarship put into action. Bavinck's erudition is on full display as he presses the truth of the Christian faith beyond the domain of theology and the institutional church into the public square.

These essays are skillfully translated from the Dutch volume, *Verzamelde opstellen*, and are edited by John Bolt (the same competent edi-

tor of the English edition of Bavinck's four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics*), and include useful Scripture, name, and subject indices. Bolt's introduction to this work serves to orient readers to the texture of Bavinck's thought and the times in which he wrote. Bolt also usefully points out four themes that are manifest in this book, which recur in varying degrees: (1) biblical faith, revelation, and religion; (2) Christianity and the natural sciences; (3) Christianity and human sciences; and (4) Christianity and politics/social ethics.

Some readers of this book will notice that Bavinck is answering questions that many are no longer asking. He deals with issues that, though appearing dated on the surface, are actually altogether relevant for our current cultural and theological situation. For example, Bavinck's first essay in this volume, "Philosophy of Religion (Faith)," addresses the essence and object of religious faith. Bavinck finds fault with both a cold orthodoxy that views faith as "doctrine" and a Pietism that values "devoutness above truth." This leads Bavinck to discuss the views of Immanuel Kant. Bavinck traces out Kant's attempt to overcome dogmaticism and empiricism (which were that philosopher's philosophic heritage) by an appeal to practical reason—the moral nature of man or human conscience—which places humans under a categorical imperative of the "thou shalt" of the moral law. For Kant, humans belong to a higher order of a kingdom of invisible elements. Consequently, if this is true reality, then our souls must be immortal and God must exist. Of course, all this cannot be empirically verified, but humans are subjectively certain of these things and act accordingly, according to Kant. This means, as Bavinck observes, that faith is a conviction without knowledge. Religion is just moral duty. Bavinck not only sets forth the shortcomings in Kant's view of "religion" and "faith," he also demonstrates the weaknesses in the views of Schleiermacher and Hegel.

What is needed, argues Bavinck, is that the unity of man be kept intact. The Reformation's contribution to an understanding of faith was to center religion in the heart and to focus salvation in regeneration, as the renewal of the whole man. Therefore, in avoiding the rationalism of Hegel, the mysticism of Schleiermacher, and the ethicism of Kant, the Reformed were able "to maintain that religion is the animating principle of all of life." The whole man is affected by this renewal, and faith can be understood as "a habit or act of consciousness because it arises out of regeneration [and] is always a loving faith in principle distinguished from what is [popularly] called 'faith,' "—that is, what is merely trust. Faith, then, has an object outside of itself and is produced and derived from outside of itself, through regeneration; and yet faith is an act of our persons, and is not merely a feeling, an experience, a doctrine, a mood, an inclination, or a sensation. Faith binds us to an object; and, for Christianity, this is the revelation of God. Faith and revelation go together; there is a correspondence, like light and the eye, sound and the ear. "They are made for and intended for each other."

The implications of such a philosophy of religion or such a conception of faith are significant. For faith responds to God's revelation, and this revelation is manifest "most fully in all the work of his hands, in all

of nature, in all of history, in the totality of the universe." There is not a split-level universe of nature and grace, secular and sacred, things belonging to Christ and things not belonging to Christ, a domain about which God is present and glorified and a domain about which God is absent and unconcerned. As Bavinck explains, if we could see properly, a person "would be able to see God's revelation everywhere—within and outside of himself, in his heart and consciousness, in the leading of his life, in the blessings and catastrophes that come to him." Indeed, "There is nothing that is apart from God in our small and large worlds, nothing that does not ultimately carry the stamp of his glory." Of course, with the fall, God's revelation finally and definitively comes to us in the person of Christ, a revelation of grace; and so we discover that grace and faith correspond to each other. This indicates, for Bavinck, that Christian faith has its own origin and its own object: a word from God to which it cleaves and by which it knows him and abandons itself to him in complete trust. This faith includes knowledge—knowledge of the God who is God, known in the face of Jesus Christ, whom he sent to us.

It would take us much too far afield to survey the multiplicity of chapters in this volume of essays. Therefore, we select just one more essay in this volume in order to showcase Bavinck's approach to a topic not strictly theological, but immensely practical for Christian conduct in the world: the last in the collection entitled "Ethics and Politics."

Given the rise of theonomy within the ranks of conservative Calvinism, the faltering of the neo-Dooyeweerdians, and the disdainful reactions against both of these schools of thought in the form of (some version of) a two kingdoms approach to Christ and culture, where Christ and Christians are principally to be concerned with the kingdom of "Mother Church," Bavinck's essay is quite informative. Even more, it leads the way past all of these less than ideal options.

In this lecture Bavinck first acknowledges the difficulty of the topic as it pertains to "ethics." He writes, "The expectation expressed so frequently—that with the demise of a religious foundation, moral principles would remain unaffected—has certainly not been fulfilled in all respects." In fact, there is no common definition of morality or agreement about a single moral commandment, or the moral implications of such a commandment. Take your pick: authority, life, marriage, property, etc. What is the origin of morality? Is it universal? Derived from needs? Is it an original characteristic of human nature? Who is a moral authority and why? Should we follow Plato or Darwin or Kant or Comte? Bavinck asserts that all can agree that morality itself constitutes "an indestructible element of human nature." But Bavinck is even more bold in his claim, for he also asserts that this morality is not a form without content, but "from birth, morality takes a certain direction and includes a certain content, although it is not rigid and immovable." For indeed in civilized societies, at least, we detect a great deal of commonality regarding what is morally permissible and impermissible, what is morally good and morally evil, between right and wrong, virtue and vice—this in spite of radically different foundations or principles of morality. Bavinck does not offer any illustrations of this point, but they are not hard to conceive. Whether one

is speaking of a society founded on atheism or a form of theism or some other religious principle, we will find laws regarding murder, stealing, the protection of marriage, etc., as we also find punishments for the violations of such said laws.

Next Bavinck addresses the "politics" side of this equation. He notes that politics can be considered as theory, as art, and as praxis, and as such, it "is concerned with that form of community among people that is the indispensable condition and essential foundation for the well-being of a nation, for safeguarding its independence and freedom, for developing its gifts and talents, and also for fulfilling its calling in the history of humanity." Throughout human history many have denied any (implied or necessary) connection between ethics and politics. Some even view the pair as "the greatest imaginable opposites," for politics is about power, not about what is morally right or wrong. But Bavinck argues that history itself proves—i.e., the practice and conduct of all important peoples prove—that there is a connection between morality and justice and therefore between ethics and politics. Bavinck proceeds to defend this claim, tracing out the relationship between ethics and politics in Plato, Aristotle, the Stoa, who did much to develop the natural law tradition, and the Christian appropriation of that tradition. In this regard, we are quite mistaken if we think that the Christian appropriation of the natural law is a monolith; it is not. The church fathers must be distinguished from the medieval scholastics; Roman Catholic and Protestant thinkers on natural law are not of a single mind, and Hugo Grotius introduced changes to the theory of natural law that were not improvements, for Grotius, like Gabriel Vasquez, "made natural law, at least hypothetically, independent of God." Grotius also "changed natural law into rational law"—a mere process of rational deduction. "As a result, natural law came to be regarded more and more as a system of laws and rules, that was fixed outside of history and could be established in an explanation of the rights of man." His modifications led to the demise of this tradition at the hands of the historical and sociological school.

Bavinck is glad, however, that this tradition is experiencing a rebirth in its purer, Christian form. Bavinck tracks the various reasons for this rebirth. Meanwhile he does not wish to jettison the important contributions to ethics presented by the historical and sociological school. But in doing so, it is critical that we not fail to perceive the indisputable and fundamental difference between being and belonging, between reality and value, between fact and norm, between on the one hand justice that matters positively according to law and on the other hand correct justice, justice that *must be*. For law can never cover the rich and varied textures of life. Observe any court of law: a judge must not merely apply the law but inevitably he must also make "use of values and norms that are not expressed in the law but are derived from his own conscience and experience." Justice has a teleological character, so that "what must be" is inherent in justice and this "must be" is inherently ethical or moral. As Bavinck elaborates: "It does not become justice from the outside; it cannot be explained from usefulness or interest; it is not related to the demand of society or the power of the state. This urge is in man since birth,

roots justice in morality, and creates an unbreakable bond between politics and ethics. Just order is grounded in moral order and possesses its strong, unshakable permanence." This means, then, that the moral order that dictates what is just, unless it is an illusion, "must exist in objective reality." And so, here, we begin to see what a properly Christian conception of natural law entails, namely that the order of justice is rooted in the moral order, and the moral order is intertwined with the cosmic order, which is the divine order that governs everything. Natural law is *God's* law—that is, natural law is the law of nature from God; as such it is revelation of the eternal law that originated with the divine Spirit.

Over time, as ethics was increasingly grounded in social contract instead of natural law, and as eudaemonism was banished from ethics, morality came to be viewed as that which safeguards inner peace in the soul, whereas law was regarded as that which safeguards external peace among people. Others, however, simply came to make a strong distinction between morality of the individual and morality of the state, which in turn has brought on an ever widening gap between ethics (the internal) and politics (the external). But this won't work, argues Bavinck. Ethics is not merely about inner volition and the internal inclinations of one's character; it also includes external acts and deeds. Conversely, motives cannot be entirely disregarded in matters of justice, as if mere external conformity to law constituted justice; to enact justice in a court of law a judge does well to pronounce a verdict by considering both the deed and the character of the perpetrator. "[I]n the same way all justice, to be sound and strong, must satisfy the ideas of righteousness that reside in the people and that are rooted in their consciences. Whoever detaches justice from those ideas and seeks its stability in power and coercion does not make justice stronger but weaker, and undermines its foundations." In short, "might," as such, does not make right. Love (an inner motive) is the fulfillment of the law (the external code). Therefore, justice does not rest in coercion; and while politics certainly consists of and exercises power, and our world requires this coercive power of the state to make life livable and to secure justice, we must also remember that all power has a moral nature. Moreover, justice does not in itself require coercive power. Justice also abides in places without the state's laws or threats of punishment for violation of law. In fact, the moral law includes the virtues of righteousness, which means that we give persons their due as motivated from those virtues, not from an explicit law external to us.

So how does Bavinck propose to distinguish between morality and justice, and likewise between ethics and politics? Justice, what is right—i.e., what is straight, honest, true, fitting, appropriate, good, and beautiful—is grounded in the natural order. For example, truth, virtue, and beauty are not the servants of violence; they themselves are robed in innocence, and thereby they are instruments and expressions of justice. For "justice is not derived from the outside, but rests in and flows from nature." Justice and morality constitute two sides of the same duty. What is true, good, and beautiful has "the right to be and to be honored."

But what is false, evil, and shameful does not have the right to exist and is dishonorable.

Bavinck points out that here on earth "all these moral qualities are concentrated in man." The doing of justice is part of the calling of what it is to be human, belonging to our rational powers and our moral nature, and in concord with the needs of the individual and the community. The state or government (and so politics) has the duty to perform justice for the sake of the community and each of its members, and therefore to enact laws that protect and enable justice (what is right). Thus we see the close relationship that exists between justice and morality. But justice is not morality or vice-versa, for they do not have altogether the same content. Justice is grounded in morality and expresses a certain side of morality. "It is that aspect of morality that can be taken under the protection of the government, and the government is even capable and suitable for this, as upholder of righteousness." This leads Bavinck to this important formulation: "Positive justice is thus rightly called that ethical minimum that the government can and must maintain within the sphere of its capability so that real morality and also all of human life can develop in all its depth and breadth and so that all the people can develop the fullness of their strength and gifts." Justice in the hands of the government therefore always has a servant role. The people do not exist for the government; rather, the government exists for the people. The state serves the community, and "the power of the state is and remains in its essence at the service of righteousness."

The calling of the state falls within the boundaries of ethics and so it has an inescapable moral task. It must follow the stipulations of justice in all of its procedures, decisions, exercise of legal, executive, and judicial powers, its foreign policies, making of treaties, trade agreements, and the like, and even the execution of war. In restraining crime with coercion and penalties for the cause of justice, so a nation may fulfill its moral calling in bearing the sword against other nations. This is an ethical duty.

That said, the calling of the state involves duties that no citizen can or may perform; and the calling of the state is justice, the doing of what is right. By means of the power it possesses, the state maintains the rule of law, both nationally and internationally. In doing the above it fulfills a moral calling to the moral law. Thus, politics is subordinate to ethics.

We have briefly surveyed this essay in order to present the reader with an example of the sort of work Bavinck is engaged in and to demonstrate the scope of his interests. Besides ethics, this volume also contains essays that insightfully examine issues relating to education, psychology, natural science, evolution, aesthetics, social relationships, and the unconscious.

It is important, I think, that Reformed scholars today take their cue from Bavinck in their own efforts to engage contemporary culture and the modern academy. If they do so, they will resist two temptations. On the one hand, and first, they will resist the temptation to engage secular culture with a kind of triumphalistic confidence, which in turn has often given way to an accommodating stance, such that Christian witness is

ultimately lost or otherwise muffled to such an extent as to be harmless and unhelpful; or, alternatively, a triumphalistic stance in the manner of post-millennialism via theonomy, with its biblicistic and anachronistic approach to every question of public morality. On the other hand, and second, they will resist the temptation to retreat from culture altogether, to huddle in the church and isolate themselves from the world and its trappings *à la* the Anabaptist tradition; or to suffer a theological split-personality *à la* the Lutheran tradition, two kingdoms functioning on split-levels of reality, with two sets of rules and regulations cordoned off from one another. In the former tradition Christ is Master of the church but not of creation. He saves us from sin's guilt but not from sin's misery. He is Lord of the church but, despite scriptural claims to the contrary, not Lord *of lords*. He is King of his people but not King *of kings*, and so he is not King of presidents, of governments, of universities, of businesses, etc. Thus, politics and social relationships, business and economics, science and art, sport and recreation, amusement, play, and entertainment—all these are outside of Christ's *redemptive* concern.

In the latter tradition, Christ is still Lord, indeed, Lord of two kingdoms—church and world—but, again, he is Lord of only one kingdom in a *redemptive sense*—the institutional church. According to this scheme, believers can rest content that some aspects of creation do not need special revelation—that is, certain aspects of life in this world do not need Scripture, or better, the principles and truth derived from Scripture, or the worldview that Scripture provides, or the redemptive claims of Christ, in order to clarify what sin obscures, since natural law, according to some representatives of a two kingdom perspective, is sufficient in itself. This means, then, that such things as the economy and education, politics and jurisprudence, social ethics and standards of public morality (and many more things), do not need the light and truth of Scripture or the Scriptural principles that can inform all such aspects of life, or Christ's redemptive power applied to them. Natural law (which is the law that God has built into the structure of creation, the imprint of which is left intact after the fall, and which therefore still presses its claims upon every human heart) is deemed sufficient in itself to guide both unredeemed and redeemed human beings (whether they live independent of one another and in cooperation with one another) in properly living for the wellbeing of human life in general and before God *in these aspects of life*. In other words, natural law is deemed sufficient for believers and non-believers alike in order to govern all non-church reality, all that is not included in the sphere of the kingdom called the church. Again, in such a version of a two kingdom model, Christ is Lord of all things; but Christ is *redemptively* Lord and Savior of the church alone; and here special revelation applies. In a non-redemptive sense, Christ is Lord of everything else; and here natural law applies, without the clarifying light of Scripture, and without the redemptive claims of Christ being brought to bear upon it.

Bavinck carves out a path that does not correspond to any of the above mentioned approaches. Therefore, in seeking to be Christians who honor Christ in every aspect of our lives, our options are not either a

theologically "progressive" and theologically "compromised" triumphalism or a fundamentalistic, biblicistic triumphalism in the form of theonomy; even as our options are not either an Anabaptistic retreat from the world or a certain version of a two kingdoms approach to life and ethics wherein Christians have one code of ethics from the Bible for church life and another and different code of ethics, independent of the first, derived from natural law for public life. Both of these approaches give us a sacred life and a secular life. No, there is another path, namely, to allow Scripture itself, scriptural principles (i.e., principles derived from Scripture), and a biblical worldview, to inform our approach and appeal to natural law (which of course is nothing else than God's law built into the created order), and to clarify what sin has obscured. Indeed, natural law requires interpretation, and all human beings—believer and unbeliever alike—are tempted to misappropriate what God has given; and it is mistaken to think that unbelievers do not suppress the truth—yes, the truth of natural law—in unrighteousness.

Reformed believers today also do well to recapture the Reformed doctrine of a general or common grace of God and, in rightly appropriating it, make use of it in seeking to understand the wider world in which the church finds itself. What is more, a doctrine of a general, non-redemptive grace of God is critical for assessing all sorts of questions that pertain to Christ and culture and to the fruition of life outside the church in a broken world.

This volume of Bavinck's essays is a fine exhibit of Christian scholarship in action.

—J. Mark Beach

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics—Volume 4: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation.* Edited by John Bolt, translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 944. $49.99 (cloth).

Almost one-hundred years after the completion of the second edition of Herman Bavinck's massive *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1911), the English translation of this work has finally been published in its entirety. This accomplishment is to be celebrated for numerous reasons, of which we mention two: (1) Bavinck is among the best theological minds that God has given to the Reformed community, a champion of orthodoxy without being archaic or unimaginative; (2) he is a Reformed theologian who grappled honestly with the challenges of the Enlightenment and its legacy, without on the one hand surrendering Scripture to the critics, or on the other hand retreating into a frightened fundamentalism or Biblicism that abandons the field to the critics. Anyone who studies Bavinck with care discovers an extraordinary intellect at work, coupled with a heart that loves God's Word and trusts its Author. In this volume, like the others, we find the rare combination of scholarship that is at once biblically perceptive, confessionally Reformed, philosophically astute, and historically erudite.

Since the three previously published volumes of this landmark work have been reviewed in earlier issues of this journal (see *MJT* 15:

207–211; *MJT* 16: 173–177; *MJT* 17: 277–283), it is not necessary to describe the process that led to the publication of this fine presentation of dogmatic theology except to say that the same competent work of translating and editing evident in the three earlier volumes is apparent in this one as well. John Bolt, the editor, provides readers with helpful summaries of Bavinck's discussion at the head of each chapter. This fourth volume is also marked by a comprehensive bibliography covering its contents, as well as a combined Scripture index, a combined name index, and a combined subject index for all four volumes of the *Reformed Dogmatics*. The bibliography, along with the indices, takes up more than two-hundred pages.

Volume four, to which the editor has given the subtitle "Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation," completes Bavinck's dogmatic project and presents, first, the rest of his treatment of the doctrine of salvation (he began this topic at the end of volume three), second, his exposition of the doctrine of the church, which includes the doctrine of the means of grace (Word and sacraments), and, finally, his elucidation and handling of biblical eschatology and all the doctrines typically discussed under the heading of "the Last Things."

It is not our interest to expound upon Bavinck's exposition of the numerous doctrines treated in these pages. It is our interest, however, simply to observe how Bavinck can assist Reformed pastors and theologians today as they seek to understand biblical truth, appropriate their own Reformed heritage, and apply both to the life and ministry of the church in our time. For illustrative purposes, then, we examine, if only briefly, two current issues that are debated within Reformed circles, and for which Bavinck's work proves instructive.

The first has to do with the visible/invisible church distinction, which has been the object of a fair amount of criticism by some within the Reformed community. According to critics of the distinction, it is unbiblical to speak of the church in this twofold way, though some such critics concede that the language of the church *as visible* and the church *as invisible* is permissible. The worry that some opponents have with this distinction is that the church is not an invisible entity but visible, and to appeal to the invisible nature of the church disparages the life and ministry of the church, which again is a concrete and tangible manifestation of God's grace, and also of God's activity, through the means of grace, in this world. By positing an invisible church over against the visible church, believers are tempted to make excuses for the church and overlook her failures, since (say the critics) the invisible church is viewed as pure and right and true and faithful, etc. Others simply challenge the biblical validity of the distinction. It is argued that there is only one church—visible churches that are found in various locales, gathered in worship and living under the preaching of God's Word. This is the church we know and the church we deal with. To posit an invisible church, unavailable to us, is both unhelpful for the walk of faith and casts doubts upon the significance of membership in the visible church, since, with the distinction in place, membership in the invisible church is what really counts.

Bavinck expounds upon the distinction between the visible and the invisible church with care (see pp. 287ff., 302–07). The distinction, as conceived by the Reformed, can be understood correctly only if we grasp a prior question, namely, what, according to a scriptural definition, constitutes "the essence" of the church? From a purely historical point of view, it was the Reformed who championed the visible/invisible distinction against Roman Catholicism; and they did this from the very outset. The distinction did not entail or mean that there are two churches; rather, the distinction refers to two sides of one and the same church. Thus "the distinction between a visible and an invisible church … originally served only to assert against Rome that the essence of the church consists in that which is invisible, in faith, in communion with Christ and his benefits by the Holy Spirit, but absolutely not to detract in any way from the visibility or the reality of the church." It is therefore a mistake to allow this distinction to mean: true church and false church; or true church and fake church; or true church and dubious church; or the true church that is important versus the doubtful church that is unimportant. Such constructs are entirely mistaken.

We see, then, as Bavinck points out, the distinction itself can be understood in different ways and most of these conceptions are to be rejected. Thus the distinction does not apply to the unsurveyability of the church, nor does it apply to the church triumphant. "The distinction between the visible and invisible church can only be applied to the church militant.…" This means, therefore, that "the church is invisible with respect to its spiritual dimension and its true members." As Bavinck further notes, the church is an article of faith. The internal faith of the heart, regeneration, true conversion, mystical fellowship with Christ, etc., are spiritual benefits that are not empirically observable with the natural eye and yet bestow upon the church its unique character (*forma*). And God has given to no single person the infallible standard according to which he or she can judge the spiritual life of another. The church does not adjudicate concerning the intimate things [*de intimis non judicat ecclesia*]. Only the Lord knows those who are his. Thus it is possible—in fact, in the Christian church it has always been the case—that chaff has nestled among the grain, and hypocrites have hidden among true believers. As long as this is true, the distinction is both necessary and valid. For the essence of the church does not consist of that which is not united to Christ in the fellowship of salvation and eternal life. (Remember, the essence of a thing is that without which it would not be what it is.) The church's essence does not consist of that which does not belong to Christ—unbelief and unbelievers, for if that were the case, the distinction between the church and the world would be erased. Likewise, the essence of the church cannot consist of that which only temporarily has an identity or association with its outward manifestation—such as undetected hypocrites who form part of its membership.

Therefore the name *church*, Bavinck explains—that is, when used for the *ecclesia militans*, for the gathering of believers on earth—always has "a metaphorical sense," meaning it is so termed, not on the basis of the unbelievers who are within, but on the basis of the believers who consti-

tute the essential component of it and determine the essence of the church. The whole is described according to its part. A church is and remains a gathering of true believers in Christ. Understood in this way, writes Bavinck, "no one can take exception to the distinction between the visible and invisible church. Rather, it should be generally acknowledged."

For Bavinck, the church comes to *visible* expression both as institution and as organism, both in its government, organization, church offices and official acts of ministry, and also in its life of believers laboring and living out in the world. "For every believer manifests his or her faith in witness and walk in every sphere of life, and all believers together, with their faith and lives, distinguish themselves from the world." (Here I alert readers of this volume to a significant typo, page 305, thirteen lines up from the bottom, where the word "correct" should read "incorrect" [*onjuist*].) The visible nature of the church, both as institution and as organism, is not compromised by the visible/invisible church distinction; rather, the fullness of the scriptural portrait regarding the church is captured and articulated in a way that brings clarity.

Bavinck reiterates that the visible and the invisible church are not two distinct churches. This allegation was leveled already by the Donatists against Augustine, and was later repeated by the Roman Catholics against the Protestants. But the accusation rests on a misunderstanding. Rome itself acknowledges that in the church there are "two kinds of people" (*duo hominum genera*), that it has "two groups" (*duas partes*), and even tries to argue that unbelievers belong to the church "in some fashion" (*aliquo modo*) but does not dare to say that they form part of "the essence" of the church. Rome, in fact, stands before the same difficulty as the Reformation (something that is likewise true for all critics of the visible/invisible distinction), since to say that hypocrites belong to the church "in some fashion" (*aliquo modo*) is not the point of contention. Protestants, too, acknowledge that hypocrites and false brothers and sisters are *in ecclesia* and belong to the church, even as the dead branches belong to the vine and the chaff to the grain. It is just that they deny that unbelievers give to the church its form (*forma*), its true character, "for it is true faith alone that saves and incorporates us into Christ."

Unbelievers are thus not the essence of the church. They are not the *ecclesia*. "The invisible and the visible church, therefore, are definitely not terms collectively describing the unbelievers and believers who exist in the church." This is why discipline is to be exercised in the church, so that upon the detection of unbelief (which earlier was undetected), a false brother or sister may be rooted out and distinguished from those who belong to Christ by faith. In that sense, "unbelievers … no more constitute the essence of the visible church than of the invisible church." They do not belong to the church in either respect, even though we lack the competence and the authority to separate them from believers and cast them out. It can be stated even more strongly: even the "old Adam" that remains in believers does not belong to the church. Nonetheless, "the church remains a gathering of believers, and everything that does not

arise out of true faith, from the new man but from the old Adam does not belong to the church and will one day be cast out."

Given the arguments stated above, Bavinck asserts that "the visible and the invisible church are two sides of one and the same church." It is the same believers who, from the one perspective, are considered from what truly abides in them—i.e., faith living in their hearts—and known only to God (this is the church in its invisibility, i.e., invisible *to us* but *visible to God*); and they are, from another perspective, considered from the side of manifest confession and life, which we are able to see and observe (this is the church in its visibility, i.e., visible *to God and to us*). Because the church here on earth is in the dynamic of becoming, these two sides of the church do not completely coincide (not even in the purest churches). Unbelief always hides among faith; wolves masquerade within as sheep; and many sheep are outside the sheepfold, for not all who belong to Christ are able to live in the fellowship of the institutional church. "But all this in no way detracts from the fact that the essence of the church consists in believers alone."

So long as it is true that the church militant, in its visible manifestation, does not in its membership perfectly correspond to the number of those who genuinely live in the communion and blessing of Christ's person and redemptive blessings (something only God can discern infallibly), the distinction between the visible church and the invisible church is both necessary and useful. And Bavinck's discussion of this topic exposes the misguided nature of the criticisms often directed against it.

A second illustration of Bavinck's usefulness for contemporary theological discussion centers upon the instrumentality of faith in the believer's justification. Some recent authors have brought confusion into the Reformed churches by making the believer's good works the *sine qua non* of justifying faith, that is, they argue that "good works" qualify faith to be the instrument that receives Christ for justification, and in this way they argue that *prior to receiving Christ by faith*—the One in whom the believer is reckoned righteous in God's sight—a person must have faith-with-good works (or an achieving good works faith) if that faith is to qualify as the instrument by which he or she receives Christ for righteousness. In this way, justification takes on a twofold grounding: principally and explicitly justification is on the ground of Christ's righteousness; but secondarily and implicitly justification is on the ground of good works, for good works qualify faith to be an instrument for receiving Christ. Thus, in coming to Christ by faith the believer is also coming to Christ with good works. To use an analogy, this is the same as saying that a "bad tree" produces "good fruit" in order to become a "good tree"; and so an unjustified sinner, in order to receive Christ for justification, must first have a faith that is validated by "good works." Thus, good works—even if they are called "non-meritorious" good works (indeed, what else would they be in God's sight?)—constitute in part the ground of justification because they qualify the instrument for justification, which is faith. Faith depends on these good deeds in order to be the instrument for receiving Christ and his righteousness. In this aberration from the Reformed position, a person who is without Christ receives Christ for justi-

fication *by faithfulness*; indeed, without such works or faithfulness, faith(fulness) is not faith(fulness). Good works, then, do not *proceed from* faith and *follow after* justification; rather, good works constitute faith and are instrumental for justification. In just that way they become an additional ground of justification.

Bavinck's treatment of the instrumentality of faith in the common taxonomy, "justification by faith alone," proves instructive for this issue as well (see pp. 209–12). Bavinck notes first that the righteousness of God by which the believer is acquitted by God "is objectively revealed in the gospel, apart from the works of the law and before faith." This is to emphasize the important point that our righteousness "is not based on works but is from God." Justification is through the work of Christ alone. Christ's work is the basis of the acquittal of many. Life proceeds from justification; and by Christ's obedience the many are treated as righteous. Justification therefore does not consist in faith or love (or we may add: faithful works of love).

Second, Bavinck observes that "faith is never presented as the ground for justification," by or through faith, yes; but never "on account of faith." Faith itself is never any kind of righteousness for our justification (and we may add: not even a "non-meritorious" righteousness). It is never a part of righteousness itself; on the contrary, justification "is from faith precisely because it is according to grace." As Bavinck writes, "Grace and faith are not opposed to each other"; but faith and works stand in opposition to one another, as does "the righteousness that is of faith and the righteousness that is of works…." Faith—without works—is the instrument of justification because it is faith in Christ; he is the object of faith. If faith justified on account of itself, or made itself fit for being the instrument of justification, then faith would have to be, in some degree, faith in itself. Thereby Christ would lose his place as our righteousness. No, God justifies *the ungodly*, as Bavinck points out—to which we add this observation: it is not, then, the person who has a faith preloaded with good works who receives Christ unto justification; rather, it is the ungodly person who comes empty handed, without any good works, and looks to Christ alone as the object and content of faith.

Third, Bavinck makes clear that the nature of justifying faith is an instrument for justification precisely because "faith is not a work, but a relinquishment of all work, an unqualified trust in God who gives life to the dead…." Our justification is *in Christ* and that is why it is "a righteousness from God." Moreover, in reply to those who think that the biblical phrase, "faith was accounted as righteousness," refers to some sort of faith as a "good work" or a "good working faith," which in turn forms the instrument of justification, Bavinck shows how this is mistaken. For the phrase in question "is an abbreviated way of saying that God in faith imputes his righteousness—the righteousness granted in Christ—to persons and on that basis acquits them." Believers have life from God through Christ, i.e., as the righteousness of God from Christ.

Finally, argues Bavinck, if faith in any way forms the ground of justification, "God is contenting himself with a lesser righteousness than he himself demands in his law." If so, the gospel does not confirm the law,

but abandons it. The gospel does not fulfill all righteousness, which means Christ does not fulfill all righteousness. God likewise forfeits his own righteousness and denies himself. Or, and this gets at the current error, God "accounts faith as something it is not, as a complete and sufficient righteousness, and so fails to do justice to his truthfulness." The charge that can be placed at the feet of advocates of infused righteousness can also be laid at the feet of proponents of the current error, namely, "they have God count something as righteousness [even if nonmeritorious] which it is not." The net effect is harmful to believers, and undermines assurance of salvation. "If our faith—a faith that is often little and weak and hidden under an overlay of doubt and fear, and that according to the proponents of infused righteousness can be lost altogether—if that faith is the ground for our justification, the Christian life is a life of continual fear and uncertainty. Instead of being fixed on Christ, the eye of faith is then consistently turned inward to oneself [does my faith have enough works to qualify as faith?]. A truly Christian life lived in the service of God becomes impossible, for, before one can truly speak of good works, one's dread before God as Judge has to be transmuted into the consciousness of his fatherly love."

In an age in which many within the Reformed world have forgotten their own confessional heritage and, sadly, greatly misunderstood that heritage, Bavinck's dogmatic project, rooted as it is in Scripture and in constant conversation with both modern voices and the wide, deep Reformed institution of theology, is an opportunity for non-Reformed writers to examine a fine specimen of the Reformed legacy and for those committed to the Reformed confessional tradition to deepen their understanding of it. Bavinck shines as a teacher, for he is a master theologian.

—J. Mark Beach

Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ*. Forward by Darrell L. Bock. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007. Pp. 392. $18.99.

The authors of this volume intend to provide the reader with a popular exposition of the wealth of biblical evidence for the church's confession of the deity of Christ. Though the audience is the general public, this volume also manages to acquaint the reader as well with the scholarly discussion of the identity of Christ's person, particularly the critical contention that the biblical witness to his deity is weak and inconsistent. Bowman is the manager of Apologetics and Interfaith Evangelism for the North American Mission Board. Komoszewski is the founder of Christian Nexus, a nonprofit organization devoted to researching, writing, and teaching on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. This book reflects the interests of its authors and provides a clear defense of the church's confession that Christ was the incarnate Son of God who entered the world in the fullness of time in order to redeem his people.

In their delineation of the biblical evidence for Christ's deity, the authors employ an acronym, HANDS. While they recognize that this acronym might appear to be something of a "gimmick," they argue that it

captures well the rich complexity of the biblical teaching regarding Christ's deity, and is a useful aid to memory, which will serve Christian believers in their calling to witness to the truth concerning Christ's person. The acronym stands for the following, principal features of the Scriptures' teaching: **H**onors, Jesus shares the *honors* due to God; **A**ttributes, Jesus shares the *attributes* of God; **N**ames, Jesus shares the *names* of God; **D**eeds, Jesus shares in the *deeds* that God does; and **S**eat, Jesus shares the *seat* of God's throne. Each of the five parts of the book consists of several chapters that adduce the richness of the Bible's teaching regarding Christ's deity in terms of these points. The first part, for example, includes five chapters on such themes as the praise, worship, and reverence that are properly directed to Christ by Christian believers. Unless Christ is God, such honors would not be properly directed to him and Christians would be guilty of a form of worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

Though this volume does not break new ground on the subject of the biblical witness to Christ's deity, it does admirably fulfill its purpose and lives up to its authors' intentions. Written in a clear and often memorable fashion, readers of this volume will find a useful and well-organized treatment of the rich variety of the uniform testimony of Scripture to the truth that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." For a Christian audience in general, and for pastors in particular, this book is among the best and most accessible summaries available on its topic. Though it may not be a volume that will convince the critics of the biblical witness, it will undoubtedly enrich believers and fortify them in their convictions about and testimony to Jesus Christ. In addition to its service in this fashion, it might also serve well as the basis for an adult Christian education class in churches.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Craig A. Boyd, *A Shared Morality: A Narrative Defense of Natural Law Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007. Pp. 272. $26.99.

This volume adds to the growing number of defenses of natural law ethics being undertaken today in response to the collapse of post-Enlightenment public consensus about right and wrong, and to the rise of postmodernism. The deficiencies of competing theories of morality (emotivism, divine command, naturalism, and analytic ethics) have left the field open for a study of this kind, which seeks to integrate natural law and virtue ethics and to apply the combined result to a number of significant challenges in present day discussions.

The author is professor of philosophy and director of faith integration at Azusa Pacific University. He plies his trade with expert precision, writing clearly, defining carefully, and illustrating appropriately.

He sets the stage by offering a preliminary account of natural law as including a number of essential elements: (1) all humans share a specific nature; (2) moral precepts are grounded in that shared nature; (3) basic moral precepts cannot change unless human nature changes; (4) these precepts are teleological (directing people to their end), but this also re-

quires a theory of virtues; and (5) all properly functioning human beings know what the basic moral precepts are.

The author's central burden is to show that natural law morality is not a complete moral system, but requires that a moral agent cultivate moral virtues as well. Natural law knows and shows the *telos* or goal that reason discerns for moral action, but does not dictate how moral acts implement reason in various circumstances and with proper motives; this is the job that virtue renders.

Following the lead supplied by Thomas Aquinas, the author's fundamental claim is that basic moral principles have their ontological and teleological basis in human nature, which is accessible to anyone. The term "nature" is particularly difficult to employ, since, as Alisdair McGrath observes, "nature" is an already interpreted category. Boyd clarifies and discusses three distinct meanings of "nature": (1) the object of scientific study, (2) a principle of corruption resulting from the human fall into sin, and (3) the destination or *telos* embedded in something by virtue of creation. This third view sees nature as an ontological category that discloses a being's essential *telos*.

The reader is given a helpful survey of the history of philosophy with a view to identifying those who developed a theory of moral nature in its teleological sense, a list of thinkers that includes Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, Francisco Suarez, Hugo Grotius, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant.

But the preeminent source for Boyd remains the thought of Aquinas, for whom natural law is a "participation on the part of the rational creature in the eternal law" (*Summa* IaIIae.91.2). The human capacity to reason is an *a priori* capacity, but the content of the natural law must be discovered by an inquiry into human nature. Humans possess natural inclinations, toward the good they share with all substances, toward what they share with other animals, toward the good that accords with reason. Said Aquinas, "Thus, humans have a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society, and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law: e.g., to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live and so on" (*Summa* IaIIae.94.2). A study of these natural inclinations helps us determine those actions to be avoided and those actions to be pursued. Reason tells us how and under what circumstances such inclinations are to be pursued. For example, humans have the natural inclination toward sexual procreation, an urge that reason declares to be appropriately pursued within marriage, for the sake of ordered society and ordered emotions.

This approach can be illustrated from sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, both of which offer insight into a continually developing human nature as a source of moral norms. History shows that cultures may have developed rules regarding fidelity and marriage to regulate and order the sexual and nurturing desires that all humans possess. Both biological and cultural arguments have served as warrants for male human parental involvement with offspring. From the perspective of natural selection a number of factors like male parental involvement seem to

place children from two-parent homes at an advantage over those from single parent homes. Here we see how sciences that study human nature can illuminate the link between human nature and natural law morality. Similarly, rules prohibiting murder would have arisen from reflecting on the biological tendencies of kin selection and reciprocal altruism.

Perhaps the most serious religious and theological challenge to natural law morality arises from divine command theories of ethics. Very simply, divine command theories teach that an act is right because God commands it, rather than that God commands an act because it is right. Is God sovereign, or is he subject to a standard ("rightness") outside himself? In the Christian tradition from Augustine to Kierkegaard, three concerns underlie the preference for a divine command theory of ethics. First, this view seeks to preserve the autonomy and freedom of the divine will. Second, such a view protects the incomprehensibility of God and his decrees. Third, divine command theory seeks to provide a corrective to human sinfulness, especially excessive self-regard.

Divine command theories criticize some views of natural law ethics for their tendency to exclude God and to ignore religious convictions in moral discourse. Boyd acknowledges the legitimacy of this critique, but in turn identifies the problem of divine arbitrariness in divine command theories. If we agree, for example, that God would not command the torture of innocent children, on what basis would we agree? Answer: because God is good. But, says Boyd, it is precisely that recognition of a standard of "goodness" that by nature belongs to every human moral agent, an account of which cannot be supplied by any divine command theory, but only by a natural law morality.

In critique of naturalist versions of natural law, which see nature as a sufficient condition for morality (thereby rendering God or any theological account of morality unnecessary), Boyd explains why nature is a necessary-but-insufficient condition for morality. Nature must be guided by some principle that transcends itself, and natural law must be guided by virtue.

By this point in our review, the curious reader has enough of a lead to investigate the author's skillful application of his proposal (that natural law morality needs virtue ethics, and vice versa) to the cultural challenge presented by postmodernist relativism, and to the philosophical challenge presented by the analytic tradition. His analysis of postmodernist relativism may be the most valuable chapter in the book.

Perhaps we may help stimulate thoughtful reading by offering several concluding observations.

For seminarians and pastors alike, this book can serve as an invigorating sympathetic-critical introduction to the natural law thinking of Thomas Aquinas.

For those who are novice or seasoned students of natural law ethics, Boyd guides us in understanding the "real" Thomist natural law, a helpful corrective for those attempting to read Aquinas through Enlightenment spectacles. This means, among other things, that both Aquinas (and a number of the Reformers) taught a *religious* or *theological* version

of natural law, natural law rooted in the person and work of God the Creator.

Given the author's perspective, however, his analysis bypasses the fundamental issue at the heart of the Protestant Reformation, namely, the relationship between nature and grace. According to Boyd, natural law morality is grounded in human nature; the standards of justice, goodness, and wisdom are somehow able to be derived from nature. Virtue supplies human beings with proper motivation and direction for pursuing the good that is apprehended through natural law. All of this raises the following questions. What, then, constitutes humanity's fall into sin? What, in fact, is sin? Does the fallenness of human nature provide no impediment at all, either to the capacity for grounding morality in that human nature or to the capacity for properly reasoning from human nature to natural law? What, precisely, constitutes the human need for grace? If by the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration, Christians receive a new nature, are they as moral agents simply "more developed" than non-Christians? What constitutes the difference, the "otherness," between natural law morality and Christian ethics? We grant that grace restores and perfects nature, and that redemption encompasses all of creation. Grace is not anti-nature, to be sure, but is grace merely something added to nature?

This is a book whose contribution to the discussion of natural law ethics is valuable for its clarity, and whose interaction with significant challenges to natural law ethics provides material for every tradition of moral reflection.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*. Foreword by Samuel Rodriguez. Afterword by Ronald J. Sider. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 174. $16.99.

Immigration has been, is, and will continue to be—I believe—a subject about which there is much discussion and conflict. It affects not only the country to which immigrants migrate, but also the countries from which they migrate.

We know that people always talk, yet they also will hide their opinions whether they are in high spirits or distressed. The media continually reminds us of the happenings surrounding immigration. But as Carroll says in his book, a lot of people offer their opinions on this subject while not having a clue about which they speak. This, in part, described me. I used to get upset when I heard the treatment Hispanics received when they were arrested by American police. It is not that now I do not get uncomfortable when injustice is done to Hispanics, but to have a general and reliable landscape regarding the dimensions and facets of immigration requires that we try to amend or, at least, bring balance to our opinions.

Since I have a twofold background, as Carroll does, that perspective helps people like me to appreciate both sides of this coin. Sometimes we are carried away by a nationalistic impulse, forgetting our identity as

believers in Christ. Not that being both Hispanic and American is the best formula to understand the current immigration debate, but it does give us, at least, an outlook on things that many other people do not have. But for those who have a twofold ascendancy, like Carroll, that fact does not as such offer the key for properly understanding immigration in America. This is rightly said.

Carroll thinks that although many people do not agree with each other on all sorts of topics, and this is especially true of immigration, as believers, we posses a higher point of reference that unites us—or at least should unite us—in how we view and approach this issue and other things that happen around us. This point of reference is the Word of God revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Scripture provides us with the lenses through which we examine every single event in our world, and especially, those events that take place close to home.

This is brought to a sharper point, as Carroll notes, in the fact that many migrants are Christians—not just nominal Roman Catholics—but committed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we deal with immigration when we know that we are dealing with brothers and sisters in Christ? Should that fact matter for the stance that we, the majority culture, take as we face the entrance of hundreds and even thousands of foreigners into the U.S.? I speak of we, not because I am an American but because of the fact that even in my own country, Mexico, we also experience, in a lower degree and intensity, the presence of foreigners who desire to enter our country.

What we have to do, I think, is first exercise honesty to God, and ask for his wisdom and guidance, in order to begin to examine biblically the American government's immigration policies. The Bible does provide perspective to all of us if we remain open to its teaching and counsel. As Carroll properly remarks: "… the Bible can orient the way the broader Christian community, denominations, local churches, and individual Christians understand their identity and role in the world today" (19). So I gladly agree with Carroll that the Bible gives us the tools we need to reconsider our starting point in the immigration debate (20). This means that as Christians we need to focus not only on cultural, economic, or national matters, but we need to widen our horizon to see what the Bible has to say from the very beginning about what we are experiencing today in America. It saddens me when I talk to fellow Christians, and although we are not talking about immigration, for one reason or another, they will express their opinions regarding the presence of foreigners in America—opinions that demonstrate that they are guided by impulses shaped by a our cultural legacy.

We all know that it is difficult to get rid of cultural traditions, not that cultural identity is unimportant or that it does not have a place in our national setting, but when cultural identities or cultural legacies becomes the driving force which fuels our minds, then we, as believers in Jesus Christ, betray that we still need to ground our thinking in the Bible and its teaching. Once more, this does not only happen in America; it happens everywhere. I have heard many Mexicans, and many other Hispanics—here in America and in Latin America—speaking rudely and in-

solently of Americans because of their strong disapproval of the American government's immigration reform effort which is supposed to help and benefit the Hispanics living here. Thus, as Carroll observes, instead of focusing on cultural, economic, and national identity we have to go back to the Scriptures. Let us then determine whether the place we choose to stand in the national debate will be based on the Word of God or whether we will ignore its teaching and defend our opinions on other grounds (23).

I think Carroll is correct to take his starting point from the Scriptures themselves, not that other Christians don't, but he tries to ground his answer to immigration in America on the whole of the biblical message. It is important to remember that we are first of all dealing with people created in the image of God. This is an obvious point, perhaps, clearly taught in the Bible, but sometimes obvious points are the ones we are more prone to forget. This applies to this issue. Many Christians do not seem interested in learning anything about migrants and their situation; they remain uninformed about the cruelty and injustice to which migrants are subjected, and also seem ready to ignore them.

Consider how many people are, at this very moment, agonizing in the desert; how many children are riding on their parent's shoulders, crying and asking for water. We might say: Well, they are breaking the law; they are doing something illegal, violating the laws for a proper and legal entrance into this country, and therefore they are suffering the consequences of their sin. Sadly, this is the opinion of very many people, Christians included. I once heard a pastor say in a meeting, when the topic of immigration came up: "Well they are illegal!" We soon and even purposely forget that we are all vulnerable and could find ourselves in an extremely difficult situation—perhaps the direct result of our own folly or willfulness—the escape from which requires the help of others.

We must respect the lives of our neighbors even when they do not look like us. I say this because I have heard of many "illegal migrants" here in America despising the African American community. It is so depressing, especially when those who express such sentiments are believers who are illegal. Illegals, too, can be racists, despising people of a different color or language.

It seems to me that although Carroll tries to keep a balance in his appreciation of the presence of foreigners in America, he sometimes sounds too optimistic and even unreal about the motives that bring Hispanics to America. We must not be so naïve as to think that all Hispanics come to America only for the sake of employment, to work hard and earn an honest living, with the goal of returning to their respective native countries. In fact, because that is not the case, I find myself in a struggle as I try to minister to the Hispanic community, for the great majority of Hispanics, once in America, often forget their relatives back home and have no desire to return to their native lands. For example, selfishness is not unknown. They will send money to their relatives when they wish. They soon adopt all the bad customs and trends (there are many exceptions to this, fortunately) of this country. They turn away from religion and do not want to have anything to do with God, and the like.

Yet, in the midst of all this, we must remind ourselves that we also are sinful human beings and that our Hispanic neighbors, illegal or not, are not animals, nor are they inferior to us; but they are people made in the image of God.

In general, I agree with Carroll's analysis and portrait of immigrants, refugees, and exiles as given to us in the Old Testament. I also agree with his analysis of the stand Christians should take in the New Testament regarding migrants. Moreover, Carroll's provides us with an informative account of the history of immigration in America. Immigration is not a new phenomenon, he pleads, but an old one.

We should remember that in both the Old and the New Testaments, the Lord always cared and cares for the poor, the despised, those who suffer in different ways. Indeed, as Christians we need to remember, and not forget, that what we possess has been given to us by God.

I do not agree fully with Carroll when he argues that in view of the migrant past of Americans years ago Americans must today be open and willing to accept immigrants, thinking that they have "so much" to offer to this country. To be sure, I believe that all humans, because they are made in the image of God, are able to contribute to the welfare of a community, city, or country; but—and I say this with much pain and discomfort—when I visit the big Hispanic neighborhoods in downtown Chicago, I do not have any incentive to visit them again. It is obvious that people in those places—not all of them—live openly in sin. The presence of murders, kidnappings, drug deals and drug addicts, gangs and gang related activity demonstrate that not all Hispanics are here to contribute to the improvement and wellbeing of the nation.

Obviously, this is a complicated subject, as Carroll repeatedly acknowledges in his book, and it will take years to enforce a reform that will seriously control the immigration influx. In my ministry to Hispanics, I have met individuals who hate Christianity. Given that disposition, it is truly hard to make progress in trying to minister to them. My point here is that we should not naïvely believe that all Hispanics, or the majority of them, come here to work, make some money, and go back to their home countries. That is, I think, a rather naïve posture and assumption to make regarding migrants. In my own little town in Mexico I have observed how many marriages are destroyed because of husbands leave their families in order to go to America, whereupon they subsequently decide to stay permanently. They no longer care about their wives and families. They are in America, yes working, but they doing nothing for the wellbeing of their families back home.

Perhaps this review sounds like a protest against the many foreigners in this country—how I wish there was no reason to protest. At the same time, however, we have to be honest with ourselves and admit our appreciation for the contribution made by migrants in our land. It is one thing to watch news reports and find reasons to despise Hispanics or to despise immigrations policies or to despise the conduct of some law-enforcement officers, etc., even as we make a mistake to base our opinions solely on stats and statistics that are reported, as Carroll notes. In fact, statistics can be misleading. It is another thing, however, to deal

with Hispanics personally and in doing so to see the depth of brokenness to which some of them have come, for truly part of the Hispanic community is on a headlong flight from God and his truth, an abandonment of the Lord, with hatred toward Christians and Christianity. Segments of this community deal dishonestly with churches in order to take advantage of offers of assistance. In that light, the optimistic or idealized portrait of Hispanics is mistaken, as if all illegals are simply in the U.S. to work and improve the status of this nation.

What is true about the Hispanic community, however, is true of most all ethnic communities in America, and it certainly is not the case that all Americans go to work every day with the goal of improving, advancing, and developing this nation unto a better destiny. This is clearly not so, especially when we scrutinize what American businesses do in foreign countries: Low salaries are the order of the day so that they can maximize profit, so that the rich get richer; the secularized Western customs and unchristian fashions that they export to other countries; the unveiled pride and sense of superiority against the indigenous peoples and attitudes of cultural supremacy toward different nationalities. To be sure, this is not true of all Americans and all American businesses. We would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge that American businesses have also brought with then many blessings to other nations in the way of economic growth and employment opportunities. Migrants have also received many blessings in America especially through the sincere and honest words and deeds of faithful Christians!

I wish there was a solution, ready at hand, to solve the complexities of immigration and illegal immigration. Perhaps, this side of glory, there is no solution or formula to be had that can bring the necessity for immigration to a halt or that can resolve the tensions that exist between people of different races, languages, ethnicities, tribes, and national origins. We truly do long for the fullness of the kingdom of God, when the Lord Jesus Christ will return to take us to our true and final homeland.

I thank the Lord for his mercy shown to me and my family through many faithful believers here in America. How good it is to meet American Christians who love the Lord and work hard to be faithful to the Scriptures and who appreciate the richness and variety the Lord has given us in this world.

—Valentin Alpuche

D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. Pp. xii + 243. $24.00.

Those familiar with both the author and the subject of this book recognize immediately how timely and how promising this contribution is. Current discussions of the relation between religion and politics in general, and between Christianity and postmodern culture in particular, will benefit from this sustained and penetrating analysis of the categories set forth by H. Richard Niebuhr's in his 1951 book, *Christ and Culture*, and the proposed alternative of a biblical-theological approach.

After explaining in comprehensive detail Niebuhr's five classifications of possible relationships between Christ and culture, Carson proceeds in his second chapter to offer a general critique and to explain how a "robust biblical theology" might affect Niebuhr's typology. Carson's criticisms are of two kinds, one internal and the other external to Niebuhr's proposal. The most basic internal criticism is that Niebuhr's sweeping categories are too comprehensive to be either accurate or helpful. It is especially Niebuhr's second classification, the "Christ of culture" category, that suffers from an inadequate basis in either history or Scripture. Indeed, Niebuhr's use of Scripture suffers under the pressure to assign various biblical writings to one or another classification, leading him to reductionism as he distributes the canonical writings among his various patterns of relating Christ and culture, thereby injuring the unity and harmony of the canon in its totality. External factors that raise doubt about the continuing adequacy of Niebuhr's project include multiculturalism, the decline in the West of confessional Christianity, and tensions between church and state in the West.

Early in the book, the author settles on the definition of culture offered by Clifford Geertz, that culture "denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" (cited from *The Interpretation of Cultures* [New York: Basic Books, 1973], 89).

As he turns next to the contribution of "biblical theology" to an analysis of Niebuhr, Carson acknowledges the disputed status of the expression, and explains his approach by surveying the major turning points of redemptive history. These non-negotiable elements of biblical teaching include creation and fall, Israel and the law, Christ and the new covenant, and eschatology. The nub of the issue he wants to address involves the move from old to new covenant, from a single covenant-nation to an international covenant-people.

By integrating the givens of biblical theology and applying them to the Christianity-culture question, Carson is able to identify deficiencies within each of Niebuhr's types. For example, he notes the omission of eschatology in the conversionist model of "Christ transforming culture," which leads to the idealization of Christian cultural efforts apart from the necessary relativizing of such efforts in light of the consummation. So, rather than distinguishing discrete models of relating Christ and culture, Carson believes that we should integrate all of them and examine their interrelationships within Scripture.

The author turns next to refine the meaning of "culture" in light of current questions raised by postmodernism. How is it possible, in light of the diversity of cultures around the world, to evaluate any one culture as to its superiority or inferiority? The Bible clearly assigns value to human action in terms its relation to God's person and revelation. Therefore, after humanity's fall into sin, every culture stands under divine judgment, though God's providential beneficence accounts for relative degrees of good among the world's cultures. In summary, then, neither the

current emphasis on multiculturalism nor current discussions of post-modern thought renders further reflection about the relation between Christ and culture obsolete. By way of examining the epistemology of postmodernism, Carson concludes Chapter 3 with an extended analysis of the book of James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*.

Four cultural forces pass under review in chapter 4, namely, the lure of secularization, the mystique of democracy, the worship of freedom, and the lust for power. The secularist vision of reality must be countered with the Christian claim to possess not merely religious truth, but truth about all of reality. Similarly, democracy's vision of human authority and autonomy must not be permitted to distract us from the righteousness of God's kingdom and rule. Freedom must be anchored in a transcendent morality if, amid the modern clamor for rights without responsibility, we are to avoid institutionalizing the creed that freedom is the ultimate good. Finally, Christians who confess God as the source of power will recognize the human propensity for idolizing power (even as religion), and will acknowledge that all forms of power can be used for good or evil.

We are treated, in chapter 5, to a clarifying discussion of church and state. Here again terms and their definitions become important to advancing the discussion. To speak of religion and politics, or church and state, or faith and public life, is to speak of relationships that are not at all identical. Carson's survey of biblical priorities for the relationship between church and state canvasses the well-known passages (Mark 12:13-17, Rom. 13:1-7, and Jer. 29:7), and the less familiar (Matt. 10:17-18, Acts, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Pet. 2:11, and Matt. 28:19-20). This is followed by historical and theological reflections on the church-state relation.

The author advises caution regarding the invitation to translate Christian values into secular categories, if we are to influence surrounding culture. Certainly there is practical wisdom here, in view of appealing to a broader audience, and in view of forming co-belligerencies on strategic issues. But precisely here lies the danger: "If all of our energy is devoted to making our stances acceptably popular by appealing to goals that are broadly secular, it is a short step to enabling those secular values to take precedence over a Christian frame of reference that bows in principle to the Lordship of Christ" (196-197). Such an approach also gives the impression that Christians think the secularists are right, and that the secularists are the only people who argue their case from a "neutral" position.

Carson finds Niebuhr's fivefold typology inadequate, since the second model cannot be found in Scripture and the other four are all present but integrated within the whole of Scripture. Moreover, as others have pointed out (Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*, reviewed by this author in the *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 18 [2007], 221-223), Niebuhr's paradigms presuppose a Christendom situation. Finally, given the complexities of modern multi-culture together with growing public recognition of multiple religions, Christians must be aware of imperiling or compromising the biblical call for all people to be converted supernaturally to the God and Fa-

ther of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the kingdom of God cannot and may not be identified with any kingdom of this world, there will always exist both tensions between Christianity and culture and the calling for Christians to bear witness to Jesus Christ within every field of cultural endeavor.

Among the options available to us for relating Christ and culture in North America, the fundamentalist option tends to be reactionary, appealing for a return to the allegedly Christian principles undergirding the founding of America, offering little support for positive cultural enterprises. Moreover, the selective attention provided by this option tends to ignore broader social evils while focusing on individual moral issues.

The Lutheran option sees the earthly kingdom as governed by Law and the heavenly kingdom governed by the Gospel. Though a citizen of both kingdoms, the Christian lives by reason and prudence in the former kingdom, and by faith in the latter kingdom. This option properly sees that a tension exists between the two sources of authority at work in the world, but easily overlooks the truth that God rules over both kingdoms. The tension soon becomes a polarization, a dualism between faith and reason, between philosophy and science, on the one hand, and religion, on the other.

A third option is the Kuyperian approach, set forth in Abraham Kuyper's 1898 Princeton Stone Lectures. Carson cautions that although it may be true that Christ's sovereignty covers every square inch of human existence, nevertheless that sovereignty is not universally acknowledged, such that there remains "an epistemological chasm" between those submitting to God's revelation in Jesus Christ and those refusing that submission. Carson identifies the subtle shift in Kuyper's thinking that occurred at the zenith of his career, after he had enjoyed astonishing political success and achievement. The results of this shift—if not in Kuyper himself, at least in his followers—included the gradual fading of the antithesis between belief and unbelief, between saving grace and common grace, a point made powerfully, according to Carson, by Dutch theologian Klaas Schilder. A second result of the shift in Kuyper's thinking was the post-Kuyper emphasis on presupposed regeneration, which, according to Carson, has led in the Netherlands and South Africa to churches that were culturally conservative but spiritually moribund. Finally, Carson observes that "[w]hen Kuyperianism, a branch of European Reformed theology, becomes the intellectual structure on which we ground our attempts to influence the culture, yet cuts itself loose from, say, the piety of the Heidelberg Confession [Catechism], the price is sudden death" (216).

A fourth approach, illustrated by the writings of Darryl Hart and Frederica Mathewes-Green, holds out minimal hope for Christians influencing their surrounding culture. Such warnings against triumphalism and utopianism are surely necessary, yet we should not despair of possible cultural changes occasioned by the Christian witness and lifestyle. The care for abandoned children by the early church, and the abolition of slavery in England, were just such occasions.

Finally, we who enjoy such abundant freedom and well-being in the West simply must try to understand our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world whose relationship to their surrounding culture is one of persecution and suffering. Unlike most of us, their experience of "Christ and culture" boils down to survival; they haven't the luxury of "options." More than any other approach, this one embodies, quite literally, the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" of the consummation.

The path toward practicing a relationship between Christ and culture that is balanced and integrated involves a rich reading of Scripture and a grasp of the whole Bible that is robust and nourishing. "[A] biblical vision that focuses on Christ and his cross, on the links between this world and the next, on bold Christian living and faithful witness, and on a large-scale vision that makes the world our parish while loving the neighbor next door, raises our eyes above ourselves, and delights in the glory of God. When churches so taught thrust their members into engagement with the wider world, their members are far less likely to be snookered by the world to which they are to bear witness and in which they are to do good" (228).

This volume will provide at least two welcome stimuli toward further reflection and discussion. First, because of such widespread uncritical use of H. Richard Niebuhr's typologies, this work offers a needed and hitherto unparalleled appraisal of the hermeneutic and theology embedded in Niebuhr's approach. Second, this book is a clear example of what may be, after all, the best paradigm with which to handle the Christianity-culture complexities, namely, the cruciform witness of traveling pilgrims—imitating the pattern and showing the power of Jesus Christ crucified, risen, ascended, and returning. This kind of life-integration emerges from the doctrinal integration borne from robust biblical-theological reflection.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

D. A. Carson, *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Reflections of Tom Carson.* Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2008. Pp. 160. $15.99.

This book of Dr. Carson, written about his father, Rev. Tom Carson, will be of interest to anyone who is intimately involved in full-time Christian ministry, especially pastors. Using journal entries from a diary kept for many years when Rev. Carson labored as a missionary in Québec, Dr. Carson opens up the rough and tumble of genuine pastoral ministry, putting on exhibit the reality of pastoral struggle, spiritual warfare, compassionate wisdom, and repenting sanctification that ought to characterize every pastor's journey with the Lord in the labor of the gospel.

This book is, indeed, about an ordinary pastor. But ministry—faithful ministry—is never ordinary; God isn't ordinary; grace isn't ordinary; and whenever lost souls come to know and love God in Jesus Christ, that, too, is never ordinary. For all pastors who feel forlorn, broken, discouraged by the injustices they suffer from within and without the church, for all pastors who need to be reminded of God's love and

grace unto them, who could use a spiritual boost, for all pastors who would benefit from the reminder that it is the Lord who builds the house; yes, for all pastors who feel all-too-ordinary and wonder whether God is using them for any enduring purpose, Dr. Carson's book about his own father's ministry is a cup of cold water to parched lips and soothing salve for scrapped egos. This book will humble you, encourage you, inspire you, and move you to love God more and trust him afresh.

May we all be reminded that the God who sees in secret and hears in secret will reward his faithful servants in ways they cannot calculate, and perhaps, too, in ways different than they expect. May all ordinary pastors read this book, forget themselves, and be recommitted to focus their ministry upon the goals of the gospel and of the grace of Christ.

—J. Mark Beach

J. Daryl Charles, *Retrieving the Natural Law: A Return to Moral First Things*. Critical Issues in Bioethics Series. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. Pp. x + 346. $34.00.

Writing on the blog of the conservative religious-cultural journal *First Things*, Ryan T. Anderson provides what may serve as the clearest, boldest, and bravest defense for the claims being presented in the book under review here. En route to mentioning this present volume favorably in his essay, entitled "Huckabee and Social Conservatives" (posted on 7 August 2008, at http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/?p=1140, accessed on 20 August 2008), Anderson opines: "Arguing that 'God said so' won't persuade anyone who doesn't already agree with you. Even though Americans remain a remarkably religious people, the Bible doesn't carry the authority it once did. And many of those who generally hold the Bible in high regard consider it 'dated' and 'out of touch' on certain controversial moral questions."

"Luckily, social conservatism has resources for public argument besides the Bible. After all, on many of the day's most important issues—human cloning, embryo destruction, creating designer babies—the Bible offers little specific guidance. And our obligations to treat fellow citizens as equals—as well as the practical requirements for broad political consensus—demand that we rise above sectarian appeals to religious authority. If social conservatism is to win the day, social conservatives—especially those seeking and holding public office—must make public arguments using public reasons to defend human life and marriage."

Or, as Benedict XVI succinctly stated: Reason's capacity for moral truth is the only reliable guide for modern pluralistic society.

The volume under review is nothing less than a field manual designed to demonstrate the viability of the contemporary revival, among especially Protestant theologians, of natural law ethics as the only plausible modern alternative—if Christians wish to participate credibly in public moral discourse—to distinctively Christian biblical ethics.

The author, J. Daryl Charles, is William E. Simon Visiting Fellow in Religion and Public Life, James Madison Program, Princeton University.

With a dismissiveness that is becoming typical among natural law advocates today (especially embarrassed Protestant advocates), Charles correctly notes that the historic Protestant pessimism toward natural law ethics roots in its doctrine of sin's noetic effect. But rather than offer a biblical and a theological analysis and evaluation of this pessimism, he simply concludes that this Protestant emphasis on the depravity of human reason removes "any common ground on which Christians and non-Christians in a pluralistic society might engage in meaningful ethical conversation or debate" (22). Shared public moral discourse depends on a commitment to natural law and "common grace" (a phrase the author consistently places within quotation marks). Consequently, as we seek to apply human moral intuitions arising from general revelation and "common grace," we can avoid the twin heresies of theocratic triumphalism (conflating faith and politics) and of separationism (isolating faith from politics).

According to Charles, historic Christian theology has affirmed the creation and human conscience as external and internal witnesses whereby all people intuit what is good and evil. Romans 2:15 is thought to speak of (in the author's words) a "law written on the heart," pointing to a moral wisdom that is universal and accessible to all. Both John Paul II and C. S. Lewis have taught us the close connection between human civilization and natural law. The pontiff reminded us that natural law corresponds to a way of living that seeks virtue and intends the community's good. "To honor the natural law is to live according to rightly ordered reason and in accordance with 'self-evident' truths" (19).

But what, precisely, is natural law?

In this volume, descriptive definitions abound. The author supplies an array of them, some of which we recite, not to be pedantic, but to illustrate the difficulty of interacting with his claims. "Natural law, then, has to do with foundational principles of morality—the permanent things that govern both private and public life" (38). One of them is the virtue of justice, which causes us to treat others with dignity and to give every person what is due.

Here is another definition: "'Natural law,' then, may be understood as a moral consensus about notions of right and wrong that arises—and is reaffirmed—through history. Human beings, wherever they may be found, are capable through reason, their sinful inclinations notwithstanding, of discerning what is good and what is evil.… This, for Saint Paul, is the law 'written on their hearts' (Rom. 2:15), corresponding to what the church variously has referred to as 'common grace' and general revelation" (40). This is theologically confusing—"common grace" and general revelation refer to "the law written on their hearts," all of which refers to the history-long human moral consensus?

Even less precise, but no less provocative, is this claim: "A robust and faithful 'public theology' will be necessary, despite the ever-present danger of conflating Christ and culture. Natural-law thinking is an indispensable part of that public theology, since it is part of divine revelation" (73). One is inclined immediately to ask: Natural-law *thinking* is part of divine revelation? Is not this claim of the same quality as the one fre-

quently encountered in the creation-evolution debate, that "science" is part of general revelation? Revelatory status is being ascribed to the results of human apprehension of revelation.

The second half of the book applies natural law morality to issues of medical ethics, especially to personhood, dignity, sexuality, and suffering. An essential quality of being human is rationality, which conveys sentience, self-conscious awareness, and ability to reflect. Persons are distinguished from animals in terms of aspiration, creativity, moral imagination, pursuit of the good. Throughout these chapters, the author repeatedly appeals to a *consensus juris*, to the fact that people broadly agree on rationally discernible moral norms, which agreement in turn informs a society's understanding of rights, justice, good, and evil. For example, one may speak, in opposing homosexual marriage, of the existence of a particular "nature" and function of human activity (e.g., procreation) "that are consensually demonstrable throughout human civilization" (256).

From all of this, the claim of Benedict XVI certainly appears plausible, that reason's capacity for moral truth is the only reliable guide for modern pluralistic society. Nevertheless, without using this review to offer an expansive analysis, we conclude with four considerations that significantly weaken such apparent plausibility.

First, *the exegetical component*. As this discussion widens, and as this book illustrates, there is a pressing need to do the exegetical work of examining the Bible texts and passages that are being tossed about so freely in this renaissance of natural law. For example, Romans 2:15 simply does *not* refer to "the law written on the heart." It speaks of "the *work* of the law," which *work* (not which law) is written on the hearts of Gentiles (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν). We may well debate what it means that "the work of the law" is written on the hearts of Gentiles, but before kidnapping verses with facile claims about this text as the *locus classicus* for an alleged historic doctrine of natural law, it would seem more appropriate to return to "exegetical first things" like grammatical, contextual biblical interpretation.

Second, *the epistemological component*. Few of those resisting the contemporary Protestant "recovery" of natural law ethics would deny the *existence* of natural law. Rather, as their opponents clearly realize, such skeptics question the *accessibility* of the natural law with respect to fallen human reason, the *functioning* of natural law with respect to the unregenerated human will, and the *stability* of the content of natural law in a fallen cosmos. Here, too, there is a pressing need for theologians who espouse a commitment to historic Protestant confessions while seeking to advance the recovery of natural law ethics to face honestly the implications of their own creedal heritage. Consider, for example, the radical "pessimism" of Canons of Dort III/IV.4, of Westminster Confession 6.4, and of Westminster Larger Catechism Q/A 96.

Third, *the Christian residue factor*. The case presented in this book appeals heavily to Roman Catholic moral theology, especially pontifical teaching. More than he acknowledges, the author's moral conclusions regarding fundamental moral categories relating to personhood, mar-

riage, and euthanasia depend on the Christian influence in forming what he takes to be the enduring cultural consensus. One suspects that Charles is persuaded about a number of moral first things not because they constitute an enduring human moral consensus, but because he holds an antecedent commitment largely shaped by Christian cultural and theological influences.

Fourth, *the theocentric consideration*. Clearly any defense of an allegedly classically Christian (to say nothing of a Protestant) theory of natural law will need to account for the implications of the first table of the Decalogue. Entailed in this account is the relationship between natural law and the first article of the *Apostolicum* as well, if this natural law is not to suffer the corrosion of Enlightenment-style antipathy toward the supernatural and the transcendent. Of what value is any natural law ethics without God the Father? To state the point differently: to claim continuity with its own tradition, a responsible Protestant theory of natural law ethics must begin with an account of the loyalty to the God who addresses all people in the First Commandment.

To be sure, there is a brutal honesty about Ryan Anderson's appeal that we "rise above sectarian appeals to religious authority." But his appeal features a breathtaking clarity as well, since the fundamental demand is really this: If they wish to influence this postmodern, multicultural, religiously pluralist society, Christians must stop using the Bible to make their case with respect to public policy and socio-political values. For Christians, then, the question clearly becomes: Participation at what price? *Retrieving the Natural Law* gives us a peek at the invoice.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

John W. Cooper, *Panentheism—The Other God of the Philosophers: from Plato to the Present.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Pp. 358. $34.99 (cloth).

I cannot think of a more competent and fair-minded assessment of what is known as panentheism than Cooper's timely study. As one who is a trained philosopher, Cooper brings the right sort of credentials to this topic; and as one who is engaged in theological education, he is well-suited to offer an assessment of the prominent claims by panentheistic advocates. Essentially and briefly, panentheism is a form of theism that literally means "all-in-God-ism," or the doctrine that all is in God. It is neither classical theism nor pantheism. But just as theism and pantheism may not be described as a single monolithic theology but each refers to a group of related ideas with common basic affirmations, the same is true of panentheism. Thus a generic definition of panentheism—its group of related ideas with common basic affirmations—can be set forth, and Cooper presents one: "The Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in Him, and His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe." As Cooper explains, this means that "God and the world are ontologically distinct and God transcends the world, but the world is in God ontologically."

The scope of Cooper's study is quite impressive. If one comes to panentheism only with a knowledge of its most recent proponents, Cooper's research will offer some surprises, since he traces this form of theism back to its Greek roots. And in this connection, it should be observed that Cooper's subtitle "The Other God of the Philosophers" repudiates the oft repeated claim that classical theism, sometimes called "perfect being" theology, is nothing other than Greek ideas dressed up in biblical garb. Cooper challenges, then, the commonplace charge laid at the feet of Christian theologians who stand in the classical tradition, namely that classical Christian theism is nothing other than a form of Greek theism—i.e., a form of Aristotelianism—and that the sooner Christian theologians rid themselves of such ideas the sooner they can reclaim (or finally claim) the Scriptural portrait of God as manifest in writings of the ancient Hebrews and the rest of the Bible.

In short form, Cooper's book consists of fourteen chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to panentheism itself, to this "other God of the philosophers." Chapter two explores panentheism as it comes to expression in Plato, the Stoics, Neo-Platonism, Christian Neo-Platonism, and in such thinkers as John Scotus Erigena, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, and Jakob Böhme. The next chapter treats pantheism and panentheism from the period of the Renaissance to the Romantic era. Thus thinkers as diverse as Baruch Spinoza, Jonathan Edwards, and Friedrich Schleiermacher are considered, besides other writers. Chapter four is a particularly important chapter, since here Cooper takes up the godfathers of modern panentheism, namely F. W. J. von Schelling (1775–1854) and G. F. W. Hegel (1770–1831). This is a chapter not to be missed. In chapter five Cooper examines the proliferation of this panentheistic conception of God, in Germany, England, the United States, and France. Cooper shows how philosophers and theologians alike offered up versions of this conception.

All of the above discussion, however, is in a sense merely introductory to the real meat of Cooper's study, which is found in the chapters that follow. Approximately half of this volume (chapters six through twelve) is devoted to major panentheistic writers: Teilhard de Chardin (who advocated a Christocentric panentheism), the Process theologians, Whitehead, Hartshorne, Cobb, and Griffin, the existential panentheism of Paul Tillich, J. Moltmann's perichoretic panentheism; and what Cooper calls W. Pannenberg's panentheistic force field and his historical-trinitarian panentheism, as well as panentheistic liberation theologians. Cooper also examines a host of twentieth-century thinkers (philosopher and theologian alike) who fit under this category of theism.

The concluding chapter of this informative and insightful study is entitled "Why I Am Not a Panentheist." As Cooper explains, here he offers his criticisms against panentheism and presents his apologetic response to panentheism. Cooper makes his case against panentheism by addressing key biblical, theological, philosophical, and worldview issues. This is also a chapter not to be missed.

Cooper is always judicious in his treatment of the views of others, expresses his openness to modify classical theism in a manner that is

biblical—for classical theism, too, has be made to serve or conform to the God of the philosophers. Cooper's book is an indispensable resource to have at hand in contemplating the doctrine of God and the contemporary discussion which aims to overcome or displace the traditional, classical understanding of that doctrine. Cooper writes with clarity, avoids the shrill rhetoric that often surrounds this controversial topic, and provides readers with a fine theological education on a subject that requires genuine philosophical discernment.

—J. Mark Beach

Rodney J. Decker, *Koine Greek Reader: Selections from the New Testament, Septuagint, and Early Christian Writers*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2007. Pp. 312. $25.99.

This *Reader* seeks to equip people to read Koine Greek literature at levels beyond first year Greek, with the primary target being the second year seminary student. Its readings are integrated with BDAG, and are illuminated with grammatical, syntactical, and exegetical notes. Each NT reading is accompanied with an English translation, which are taken from a variety of Bible versions. Koine selections from outside the NT include readings from the Septuagint, the apostolic fathers, and the early creeds. Helpful appendices explain how to use BDAG, contain a verb reference chart and a participle flow chart, and provide a number of vocabulary helps.

Greek teachers and students alike will appreciate the clarity of presentation, the expansive list of translation resources, and the highly usable tool for classroom teaching-learning as well as inductive language study. A highly recommended tool for busy pastors as well!

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

James A. De Jong, *Henry J. Kuiper: Shaping the Christian Reformed Church, 1907-1962*. The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, Donald J. Bruggink, general editor. Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007. Pp. xviii + 270. $28.00.

"No man in our time," wrote the late John Kromminga in 1963, "has left a deeper imprint on the Christian Reformed Church than Henry J. Kuiper." No serious student of Christian Reformed Church history would dispute that claim. As pastor, churchman and longtime editor-in-chief of the *Banner* [the official weekly denominational publication], H. J. Kuiper exerted an influence upon the ethos of his denomination that few could rival.

As De Jong illustrates, the two influences which largely colored Kuiper's theological outlook were the spiritual warmth and theological rigor of the Dutch *Afscheiding*, coupled with the comprehensive, dynamic Calvinistic worldview arising from the works of Abraham Kuyper and the *Doleantie*. Add to that the fact that Kuiper entered the ecclesiastical stage (1907) at a defining moment in his denomination's history. Wave after wave of Dutch immigrants were entering America at the turn of the cen-

tury, giving rise to unprecedented growth in the small Christian Reformed denomination. At the same time, these largely immigrant congregations would soon be facing an identity crisis as they struggled with the social, cultural, and theological challenges of Americanization. It was in this environment that Henry J. Kuiper would cut his teeth and emerge as a church leader. Kuiper recognized the need for the Dutch immigrant church to move forward in its twentieth-century American milieu, but he never sought to accomplish this transition by merely sloughing off her Dutch Reformed past.

As a churchman and regular delegate to the annual Christian Reformed synod, Kuiper found himself in the midst of some of the major theological controversies of the 1920s, including the Janssen case, the repudiation of common grace by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema, and the report on so-called "worldly" amusements. The outcome of these heated controversies was to leave a lasting impression upon the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and upon Kuiper's own thinking. As an outspoken young defender of Dutch Reformed orthodoxy during this turbulent period, Kuiper, in the words of James Bratt, "rose to the top through his vigilance for orthodoxy and holiness, by thus sounding an old alarm in a new tongue."

In addition to numerous liturgical, ecumenical, and evangelistic projects carried out on behalf of his denomination, Kuiper's most significant contribution to the history of the CRC was his tenure as editor-in-chief of the *Banner* (1928-1956). Possessing a keen and articulate mind, Kuiper was in his element as a theological polemicist. Not only did he address the ecclesiastical issues of the day, he also interacted at length with a number of social and political issues, and did so quite capably. Kuiper did not merely serve the churches as Editor of their denominational publication; he became something of an institution. As James Bratt concluded, "Kuiper made the *Banner* stronger than it had ever been or would ever be—*the* authority on all matters of truth and morals, a voice whose every word was to be eagerly awaited, treasured, and—most of all—heeded." In the early days of his tenure at the *Banner*, Kuiper had chided elements of the CRC for their stubborn resistance to any change whatsoever, but much of his editorial energy was spent defending orthodoxy from the ever-present influences of theological compromise and worldliness.

Although some within Christian Reformed circles, including James Bratt, have been critical of what they perceive to be a largely negative and reactionary strain in Kuiper's leadership at the *Banner*, James De Jong offers a more charitable and even-handed appraisal: "In the sixteen years of his editorial life through the Second World War, H. J. Kuiper displayed an informed, wide-ranging engagement with social issues. He thought about the world and its condition as a neo-Calvinist, one persuaded that he had been called to claim every aspect of human life and endeavor for the glory of God and in obedience to the Lordship of Christ.... By contrast, the last decade of Kuiper's editorship showed comparatively less attention to social and political issues.... He merely, but definitely, tacked with the shifting cultural winds of a new era" (248).

Readers desiring to gain a better understanding of the ethos and development of the Christian Reformed Church during the first half of the twentieth century will be richly rewarded by James De Jong's illuminating portrait of a man whose life and ministry were inextricably linked to the dramatic and decisive developments in the denomination's history.

—Paul R. Ipema

Arthur H. DeKruyter, with Quentin J. Schultze. *The Suburban Church: Practical Advice for Authentic Christianity.* Foreword by Leith Anderson. Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. Pp. xviii + 148. $18.95.

Inasmuch as many pastors find themselves serving churches in suburbia, and inasmuch as the work of church-planting continues at a steady pace among suburbanites, often with little success, Arthur DeKruyter's thoughtful book is both timely and welcome. As the founding pastor (now emeritus) of Christ Church of Oak Brook, Illinois, which has the distinction of being one of the fastest growing suburban churches in America, DeKruyter writes from concrete experience, forty-five years in the pastoral ministry and thirty-one planting and nurturing Christ Church at Oakbrook.

Perhaps what sets this book off from more recent popular books that deal with church growth and suburbanite church planting is that DeKruyter's story is not according to the formulae of the "seeker sensitive" model; rather, this "success story" is founded upon fundamental principles of knowing the mind of suburbanites, establishing a presence within a community that shows love and care (the posture of a servant), and identifying with their life and situation in order to connect with lost neighbors. DeKruyter points out, while not succumbing to the temptation merely to cater to felt needs, the church makes a mistake when it ignores them. The gospel without works of service, without caring about the whole person, is a sham. Many lost neighbors, beneath their façade of success and fulfillment, live lives pockmarked with hurt and disappointment. Ministry therefore must be up-close and personal; it must be neighborly, marked by gatherings in someone's home for food, drink, and conversation. This means, too, that unless the church shows Christ's love to lost suburbanites (no faking it), we cannot gain enough ground in order to win a hearing for the gospel. Thus, if distain and disapproval are the first things we convey to these lost souls, we simply inform them that they are not *us* and that the church (and Jesus and the gospel) is not for *them.* DeKruyter argues that in "nonjudgmentally" bringing the gospel to them, they come under the judgment and conviction of the gospel in due time, by God's grace. Having listened long enough to hear the gospel, they begin to understand it as *for them.* Thus DeKruyter urges us to bear patiently with people who do not come to the church as prepackaged Christians, who do not have it all together, and who are not ready to live mature and triumphant Christian lives.

DeKruyter also focuses upon the importance of energizing volunteers for the life and work of the church. It is not enough to have persons will-

ing and desiring to help, they must also be guided along so that they know *what* to do and *how* to do it. DeKruyter competently discusses lay leadership and how to deal with "controlling" volunteers. Of course, when a church has effective volunteers, some pastors can feel threatened and insecure. DeKruyter treats this tender subject as well, and calls pastors to face up to their own "pastoral pride."

While it is obvious that the church cannot hire out the task and life of the church's calling, giving it over to professionals, a ministry staff can be a blessing. But that requires that the church be vigilant in its supervision and assessment of staff. The church needs to be honest and constructive in its assessments; and this needs to begin with the pastor and his preaching. Even more, it begins with the preacher honestly assessing his preaching. This is where many pastors fall off the path. They either overestimate their pulpit prowess and the effectiveness of their sermons; or they give up on improving at all: boring I am and boring I will remain; predictable I am and predictable I shall remain. Why do pastors opt for "just okay" as "good enough"? DeKruyter's chapter on "Assessing Preaching" is, perhaps, the best part of this book. He urges all suburban pastors to labor hard in this area of ministry, so that their churches could have a sign out front that says honestly, "If it's preaching you want, we have it."

This book is, then, on one level, simply about the church and what the church is called to be whatever its socio-economic status and setting. Every church must engage its culture and community; every church needs to see beyond the narrow confines of its own community and craft a global vision. Every church is called to love neighbors near and far. And every church is called to grow together in the faith. If there is anything that is peculiar about a suburban church or a suburban setting in being Christ's church in the world, wealth and affluence must count as the distinctive trait that characterizes, at least, many suburban communities. Thus DeKruyter takes up such issues as the biblical view of money, cultivating stewardship in a new congregation, the use of money under Christ's lordship, giving and tithing, and overseeing needs and managing the use of funds. Here, as throughout this book, DeKruyter writes with the wisdom and intelligence of an experienced pastor.

DeKruyter's book, assisted by Quentin J. Schultze, has one other feature to be noted, namely, each chapter concludes with a set of discussion questions. This makes the book serviceable for study by groups of church members or by office-bearers or a ministry staff.

—J. Mark Beach

Arie de Reuver, *Sweet Communion: Trajectories of Spirituality from the Middle Ages through the Further Reformation*. Translated by James A. De Jong. Text and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought, Richard A. Muller, general editor. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Pp. 303. $29.99.

The Dutch Translation Society is to be commended for the translation of this important work on the spirituality of the Dutch Further (or

Second) Reformation. Little historical work has been done in English that distinguishes or relates the spirituality of the Dutch Further Reformation from that of either the Reformation or medieval mysticism.

Arie de Reuver is a professor of systematic and historical theology at the University of Utrecht. The goal of his book is to show the continuity and discontinuity between two orthodox medieval mystics and the mysticism of five Further Reformation divines. The book begins with a careful definition of what is meant by “spirituality” and “mysticism” within an orthodox Christian context.

The author demonstrates that the Further Reformation not only appropriated the spirituality of the Reformers, but also “did not hesitate to cross the boundaries of the Reformation and to appeal for assistance to the pre-Reformation’s devotional literature” (17). The result is a spirituality that is broadly catholic. De Reuver takes issue with attempts to play off the Reformation and the Further Reformation against each other. The Further Reformation rejected the medieval doctrines of grace (and merit) and of the sacraments (as did the Reformers) although “they incorporated such devotional nuggets as meditation, solitude, mysticism and contemplation into their own Reformed framework” (18). The writers in the Further Reformation wedded Reformed orthodoxy with a piety that encouraged intimate communion with God. The chapter on Herman Witsius demonstrates how Reformed spirituality flows out of confessional Calvinism within an academic context. This book shows how the old Calvinists cherished the affective dimension of the Christian life.

The book is divided into seven chapters, each devoted to an individual thinker. The book is an enjoyable read because it includes a brief biography of each individual. The author looks at the spirituality of seven writers by examining their lives, vocation, and writings. This is especially helpful with respect to the Further Reformation individuals who are not as widely known.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471) are first treated since they were the two most important influences on the spirituality of the Further Reformation. The chapters on Bernardian and Kempian spirituality are of interest because the author examines the place and role of love, faith, merit, justification, grace, contemplation, the *raptus*, and bridal mysticism in their theologies. Although both Bernard and à Kempis buy into the medieval view of merit, it is striking how Bernard can place an emphasis on grace. He writes: “Whatever you calculate on the basis of merit is lost to grace. I want nothing to do with merit by which grace is superseded. I shudder at everything that proceeds from myself” (37). He can forge the aphorism: “It is sufficient for merit to know that merit is insufficient” (37). However Bernard did not teach a “purely forensic form of justification” (58). Wilhelmus à Brakel had correctly pointed out that à Kempis had little to say “about the Lord Jesus as a ransom and as our righteousness, and how he is instrumental in the justification of a true believer” (99). De Reuver concludes: “Whenever à Kempis ascribes some meritorious value to the practice of discipleship, therefore, the relationship of justification and sanctification is out of balance” (99).

Bernard's spirituality is striking for its emphasis on the love God as well as for its bridal mysticism. De Reuver distinguishes between "meditative Christ mysticism" and "bridal mysticism" (46). The former term refers to the contemplation of the suffering and ascended Christ. Medieval contemplation stressed meditation on Christ in His humiliation. "Bridal mysticism" refers to contemplating Christ as bride-groom. Especially Bernard's sermons on the *Song of Solomon* had a long and lasting impact on Western spirituality. The pietistic writers of the Further Reformation borrowed Bernard's spiritual terminology that was "graphically colored by the language of the Song of Solomon" (60).

Kempian spirituality comes under criticism by de Reuver because "the atoning significance of Christ's work is overshadowed by the exemplary perspective" (99). The accent was placed in Kempian spirituality on the life of sanctification. How does one explain the attractiveness of Kempian spirituality to the Further Reformation when it had serious lacks related to the atonement and justification? De Reuver thinks that "a number of fundamental spiritual themes that cross confessional boundaries" explain the attraction of Kempian spirituality (101). These themes include "heartfelt love of God, being humbled in one's guilt for sin, dependence on grace and longing for the glories of heaven" (101).

Five Further Reformation authors were selected for consideration. Willem Teellinck (1579-1629) was chosen because he is a father of the Further Reformation. Theodorus à Brakel (1608-1669) was selected because of his striking meditative life-style. Guiljelmas Saldenus (1627-1694) is a personal favorite of the author due to his irenic style and rich imagery. Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711) was selected because of his broad influence. Herman Witsius (1636-1708) expressed his spirituality within an academic setting.

Theodorus à Brakel is of interest because of the almost monastic-like discipline in his personal life, his teaching on the *raptus*, and his use of the triad of childhood, youth, and fatherhood to describe growth in spirituality. Listen to the description of his exercises: "From the time of his 'youth in Christ,' he always maintained three set times for meditation daily, which he called 'exercises.' To these he added a fourth when he came to regard himself as a father in Christ. The first began very early in the morning. Three or four hours a morning was not exceptional. The second fell immediately before noon, just prior to the noon meal. About three o'clock in the afternoon, meanwhile, he offered a short prayer. The third began about twilight and the fourth when it was actually bedtime—after a household service that included a Bible reading, a song, discussion and prayer. This last exercise might last until midnight or even until two o'clock in the morning. Given these times that each demanded an average of several hours, Theodorus certainly spent a third of each day in prayer and spiritual reflection. He could not do with out" (167-168).

De Reuver concludes that although à Brakel distinguished between three stages of spiritual maturity using his triad of childhood, youth, and fatherhood, he is not really describing progression through three levels of spirituality. There is continuity through these three stages.

Wilhelmus à Brakel certainly guards against the danger of allowing the concept of love to put faith in its shadow. In response to certain contemporary Pietists, which included the Labadists, he claimed "True believers live by faith and not by contemplation! For that very reason they approach the Father only through Christ, who is their righteousness" (252). Note how the Further Reformation emphasized faith, justification, and Christ as mediator.

It hardly needs to be said that it is important in the contemporary context for Reformed pastors and theologians to develop a biblical spirituality. On the one hand, there is the pantheistic spiritualism found in the New Age movement. On the other hand, there is the anti-theological spirituality flowing out of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Third Wave movements. This book can help lay the ground work for the development of a Reformed spirituality that flows out of a confessional Calvinism. Important questions need to be answered like: 1) What is the goal of meditation? 2) Should Christians contemplate the suffering Christ as well as the ascended Christ? 3)What role do the affections play in the Christian life?

This book points the way towards a confessional Reformed spirituality in a number of ways.

First, a Christian spirituality rejects the idea of heretical mystics that the goal of contemplation is identity of being with God. We find in Bernard and the later thinkers an emphasis on union with Christ that avoids any form of pantheism. Bernard taught that as the bride clings to Christ in a holy kiss "the bride becomes one spirit (*unus spiritus*) with him as he stoops down. In this way union is achieved between two completely dissimilar parties: an earthly being and the heavenly Christ" (47). A Reformed spirituality gives due emphasis to the mystical union with Christ and Peter's teaching that Christians are "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). Athanasius said: "God became man that we might be made god." The Greek Fathers dared to speak of man's "deification." John Calvin wrote: "Let us then mark that the end of the gospel is, to render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us" (*The Second Epistle of Peter*, 371). Herman Witsius wrote that "the illumed understanding of the godly man renders a person divine and Christ-like," at least "insofar as that can happen to a person" (278). Witsius writes that our union with Christ is "a unity in love" (276). The Further Reformation writers denied that believers become fused into a single being with God yet they used strong language to describe how believers are united to Christ in a mystical union and in a communion of love.

Second, a Reformed spirituality avoids spiritualism. Meditation and contemplation are never divorced from the Word. The Holy Spirit draws us to God through the Word. Wilhelmus à Brakel reproaches "pietists" who claim that "people must rise above the word in a higher form of contemplation" (252). Willem Teellinck "emphatically distances himself from experiences that pass as spiritual, but that are not because they lack biblical foundation. The movements of the Spirit never carry us above the Word, but arise exactly from the Word and bring us to the Word" (124). Reformed Christians ought to rediscover meditation on the Word.

Third, Reformed spirituality is not content with meditating on the passion of Christ—but also reflects on the resurrected and ascended Christ.

Fourth, Reformed spirituality ought to take a stand against spiritual elitism. De Reuver can write that "the monastic climate contributed a somewhat elite dimension to Bernard's mysticism" (58). Both Theodorus and Wilhelmus à Brakel (unfortunately, in my view) leave room in their spirituality for experiences of the *raptus* for the elite few. The author does say about Wilhelmus: "Being caught up to the third heaven, as overwhelmed Paul, à Brakel obviously regards as a unique and unrepeatable, apostolic privilege. At least, he writes—differently than his father—that this is not permitted "for us" in this age" (250). But Wilhelmus à Brakel also speaks of "being enraptured—the *raptus*—with a love for the holy God" (255). What is striking is that he says that this experience is bestowed "not on all, but only on some" (255). De Reuver thinks "it remains an open question as to the way this experience is to be distinguished from those mystically defined times that in principle are available to all believers" (255). He does find the following difference: "The mystical experience in which *all* believers are able to share always involves the contemplation of Jesus, particularly Jesus in his glorification. The contemplation that he reserves exclusively for *some* involves God, not Jesus" (255). à Brakel does not want to by-pass Christ but he is thinking about contemplating not the works of God—but "marveling at who he *is* for us" (255). This high level of contemplation is a foretaste of heaven and is reserved for a select few. I do not think that should play down the level of sweet communion that certain believers can experience, but my sense is that the Bible does not teach that there are higher levels of Christian experience reserved for the elite few. Therefore there is a need for critical interaction with Further Reformation divines on this point.

Fifth, Reformed spirituality advocates a public mysticism rather than a monastic mysticism. It can relate to the spirituality found among the Brethren of the Common Life. Outside monastic walls the Scriptures were daily read and meditated upon in the fields and workshops. "Reformational piety understands seclusion and meditation, moderation and concern with eternity, but its asceticism is spiritual. The reformers had their own monastic traits. Luther meditated for hours each day, and Calvin only slightly less. Their intimacy with God, however, detracted nothing from their solidarity with the world. Thomas' ideal consisted of world-flight" (101).

Sixth, Reformed spirituality promotes a corporate spirituality. Communion with God is not limited to private devotions but also includes active listening to sermons. "Moreover, Witsius understands that this Christocentric spirituality is not only practiced through private meditation but also through preaching" (274). Therefore Witsius emphasized to future pastors that they were to act like "friends of the Bridegroom."

Seventh, a Reformed spirituality turns on the hinge of faith—although a true and living faith produces the fruit of love. De Reuver has a very important insight when he contrasts the emphasis on love in the medieval mystics to that on faith in the Further Reformation. "One could

posit the thesis that the spirituality of Bernard turns on the axle of love, while that of the Reformation turns on that of faith" (58). "While faith is unmistakably central in reformational spirituality, Thomas' spirituality obviously pivots on love" (100). "When the Reformation gives more attention to (clearly received) faith than to love, it does so with an eye toward justification by grace alone. Love adds no weight to the scale" (100). Reformed spirituality must consciously be oriented towards *sola fide*.

One small problem I have with the book is the fact that a good number of quotations were left in German, French, or Latin. This could limit the readership to a more scholarly audience when this book deserves wider readership.

—Nathan Brummel

Iain M. Duguid, *Esther & Ruth.* Reformed Expository Commentary, Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, series editors. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2005. Pp. xii + 201. $17.99.

Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel.* Reformed Expository Commentary, Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, series editors. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2008. Pp. xiv + 236. $22.99.

The two volumes under consideration are part of the *Reformed Expository Commentary* series of which the author is the Old Testament Editor. This series of commentaries is born out of the conviction that in every generation we have the twofold task of faithfully expounding the Word of God, and continuing to doing the work of theology ("reflecting on the teaching of Scripture…and applying them to contemporary culture" – *Daniel,* ix). Since the series editors, Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, are persuaded that this work is best done "in the pulpits of the church," all the commentaries of this series—including the two volumes discussed here—were sermons first preached "to real people in the church" (*Daniel,* ix–x). This is very important to keep in mind since it determines the focus of these commentaries. These are not exegetical commentaries commenting word for word or verse for verse. If you turn to them with this expectation you might be disappointed.

Yet it is exactly in its sermonic feel and style that the value of these commentaries lays. For believers who seek devotional expositions of Scripture that will instruct, encourage, inspire, rebuke and challenge them, these two volumes by Iain Duguid cannot be more highly recommended. They are also excellent sources of inspiration for preachers who seek to expound God's word faithfully.

Probably the best way to briefly introduce the qualities of these two books dealing with three different Bible books is to show how they fulfill the four fundamental commitments of the series, namely, to be biblical, doctrinal, redemptive-historical, and practical (*Daniel,* ix–x). First, each chapter in the two commentaries gives careful attention to the details of multiple verses at a time, mostly one whole Bible chapter (with the notable exception of chapter 10: "How to Wait for God" in the *Daniel* volume dealing with only 8:27). Although paying careful attention to the particulars of each passage, the passages are expounded more holistically, so

for instance, in commenting on Ruth 2 the following vv. 4–7, vv. 9–12, vv. 13–14 & vv. 15–19 were dealt with in groups of a mere four pages (*Esther & Ruth*, 158–161). This approach allows for the flow of the biblical narrative to come clearly to the fore and the drama of the biblical story is not lost in the details of the exposition. Although most scholarly discussions are bypassed Duguid does make a defense of Daniel 11 as authentic predictive prophecy and not merely a later addition, a "pseudo-prophecy" (193–195). In this way maintains the integrity of the Biblical text.

Next, the claim of the series editors that "each volume will teach, promote, and defend the doctrines of the Reformed faith as found in the Bible" is maintained in these two volumes. Throughout them the relevant doctrines are elucidated as they are brought to the fore in the Biblical text. For instance, throughout the commentary on Esther the invisible providential hand of God and the related themes of God's sovereignty and human responsibility are brought out (cf. *Esther & Ruth* 14–15, 26, 41, 67–69, 79–81, 91–92 to list but a few places.) In the latter half of his commentary on Daniel he discusses various eschatological "central truths" on which "Christians who hold to a variety of different end-times scenarios can agree" (*Daniel*, 106). For someone who has strong opinions about a particular eschatology, Duguid's apparent lack of commitment to any particular view might be disappointing (cf. *Daniel,* 137–138). After briefly explaining the three millennial views, however, he points out that Daniel's response to the vision of Chapter 8 recorded in 8:27 "does affirm and challenge aspects of each of these views with respect to how we should wait for the end" (*Daniel,* 139). In his unfolding exposition of this verse he does criticize premillennialism's over-confidence in explaining the details of Daniel's visions (141) and its proclivity to isolate people from society in light of Christ immanent return (143), while he also criticized the optimism of postmillennialism in expecting the "gradual 'Christianization' of the world" (145). To the extent that amillennialists are also "tempted to form a safe enclave and preach from its walls a message of judgment on the world around us, without any empathy for, or involvement with, those our words condemn," they too are challenged to repent. He takes issue on other occasions with certain premillennialist interpretations, most notably its understanding of Daniel 9:20–27 (cf. 170–173).

It is particularly in this third area that Iain Duguid excels as an expositor. The centrality of the redemptive-historical focus on Christ permeates every chapter of these books. In surprising and often inspiring ways the author brings out how Christ is brought before us in the unfolding stories of these Old Testament books. In his exposition of Esther 1, he contrasts the kingdom of Ahasuerus and the kingdom of God leading to a contrast between the summons to the messianic banquet and the summons of Queen Vasti to appear before Ahasuerus (*Esther & Ruth,* 15–16). In his remarks on Ruth 3 he points out that the true love story behind the scene is "the love of God for his staying sheep…. This love took its fullest shape in the coming of Jesus Christ" (*Esther & Ruth,* 178–179). Very early in his exposition of the Book of Daniel, Duguid makes clear that the message of the book is thankfully not "Be like

Daniel and all will be well." He goes on to explain how compromising Christians become righteous and more and more faithful in their lives though Christ: "The good news of the gospel, however, is not simply God is faithful to those who are faithful to him. It is that a Savior has come to deliver faithless and compromised saints like us. Our salvation rests not on our ability to remain undefiled by the world, but rather on the pure and undefiled offering that Jesus has provided in our place.... Remind yourself often of this gospel. Fix your eyes on Jesus Christ crucified, raised, and exalted. He has not only pioneered the route home; he *is* the route home. Trust in him and ask him to work in you a true faithfulness.... Be constantly dependant upon his sanctifying work, looking to him to keep you faithful, not to your best efforts to 'Be a Daniel' " (*Daniel,* 16).

The fourth and final commitment of these commentaries, to be practical, is met on almost every page. What stands out are the vivid illustrations from contemporary culture (especially books and movies) and the piercing applications. We find an excellent example of contemporary culture to illustrate biblical truths in his discussion on Daniel's vision on the four monsters in Chapter 7. He reminds us that these creature are "not merely 'PG−13,' like the dinosaurs out of Stephen Spielberg's movie *Jurassic Park*; they are 'R' rated, like the vampires and evil zombies of the most chilling and disturbing horror movie" (*Daniel,* 109). On the same page we have references to the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds.* When it comes to application, Duguid masterfully seeks to apply each passage to us. I will give but one example. After exposing Haman's idol of "public recognition" in light of the events of Esther 5 he later applies it to all Christians: "The Truth is that our emotions are not lastingly shaped as they should be by the expected and underserved invitation we have received to the royal banquet. Haman's elevation by the king and the honors that continued to be poured out upon him should have insulated his heart from the impact of minor difficulties. Instead, his thoughts were rapidly transformed from joy to despair by the perceived slight to his honor and status that Mordecai represented. What a ridiculous overreaction! Yet are not we equally fickle? Shouldn't our joy in our salvation be far more impregnable than Haman's, because it is based on the unparalleled glory of God's incredible goodness to us? In reality, though, how often have we said to ourselves, 'Yes, I know that God has made me his child, and a coheir of Christ's glorious inheritance, yet all this is worth nothing to me as long as I do not have ______ [fill in the relevant comfort, security]'?" Perhaps our joy is lost because of lack of love at home, or lack of respect from our peers, or lack of acknowledgement at work. We are cast down by minor earthly setbacks because we have lost sight of the incredible glories of our heavenly inheritance (*Esther & Ruth,* 71).

So the hallmarks of the *Reformed Expository Commentary* series are beautifully reflected in the two volumes of Iain Duguid. They are exegetically and theologically sound, giving careful attention to the revelation of Christ throughout, and constantly illustrating and applying the Word. I highly recommend these volumes for all Christians and pastors. Chris-

tians will find them to be a challenge and inspiration advancing their Christian life, while pastors will be greatly helped by them to see and preach Christ from all the Scriptures!

—Jacques Roets

Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis, David M. Howard Jr., series editor. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2007. Pp. 234. $20.99.

This book is the second in a series of six exegetical handbooks that Kregel Publications intends to produce that deal with the principles and methods of opening the Old Testament texts for both professional and layperson alike. David M. Howard, Jr., serves as the series editor. The first volume (Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., author) deals with the historical books. The second volume of the series is the contribution of Mark D. Futato, who is the Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. Other forthcoming books in the series will cover the Pentateuch, wisdom literature, the prophets, and apocalyptic literature.

In order to provide an order of format in the series, each volume is to be written around a six-chapter schema, namely the following: 1. The nature of the genres; 2. Viewing the whole; 3. Preparing for interpretation; 4. Interpreting the text; 5. Proclaiming the text; and 6. Putting it all together. While each individual author in the series is free to entitle the various chapters as he wishes, the chapter contents are intended to follow the general approach outlined above.

Futato includes the use of Hebrew text, but he provides English translation to his readers who may not be fluent in the Hebrew language. He makes use of both the NIV and New Living Translations (NLT, 2004 and 1996 editions) in his English references.

His first chapter brings before the reader the appropriate definitions of colon, strophe, and stanza, terms which are so important in appreciating Hebrew poetry. His discussion of parallelism (33ff.) is also up-to-date in terms of noting that parallelism is not "saying the same thing twice in different words" (*à la* C. S. Lewis in *Reflections on the Psalms*, 11), but rather the second colon in a line of bicola is most often an elaboration or a further refinement of what is stated in the first colon of the bicola. Writes Futato (38), "Parallelism is the art of saying something similar in both cola but with a difference added in the second colon." That difference is a "movement… some kind of addition." This definition is given adequate examples, with Futato concluding that the reader should read the poetry slowly enough in order to appreciate what those slight differences are, with such thoughtful reading thus able to draw out the richness of the Hebrew poetry.

Another helpful discussion is Futato's call for readers to appreciate the imagery created by the several Psalms. Here we must remember the "source domain and target domain" (44). He defines source domain as "the aspect of ordinary life the poet is drawing from to create the image" while the target domain is "the subject the poet is speaking of" (44). He

elaborates on the point by noting that source domains can create different associations in different contexts, thus avoiding a wooden literalism in reading the Biblical text. Futato correctly draws our attention to the importance of context and the relative fluidity in the Bible's use of terms and images. Biblical imagery in the Psalter also employs "mythopoeic imagery." The biblical writers did not believe the myths that were the religious stock of so many surrounding cultures, but they did use the language of myth in order to engage the religious world around them (e.g., in an apologetic manner; 55).

A further element in appreciating poetry is learning to follow the patterns that the Hebrew poets employed (49ff.). Futato discusses the linear, parallel, and symmetrical patterns of the psalms, the last of which is often called a chiasm.

In his second chapter ("Viewing the Whole") Futato distinguishes the original use of the individual psalms (which use is largely lost to us) and the canonical use. He affirms that the wisdom tradition is largely responsible for the shaping and canonical purpose of the Psalter collection. Psalm one is important in his discussion, with its emphasis upon blessedness, study of Torah, and the end results that distinguishes the righteous and the wicked. He writes, "We are thus led to conclude that the book of Psalms is an instruction manual for living a truly happy life" (67). This reviewer appreciates such a point of view, but what could very profitably be included in such a purpose statement is that the truly happy life is lived in the context of God's Kingdom under the rule of the divinely-appointed Messiah.

And Futato actually writes along similar lines when he notes that Psalms one and two are in fact two sides of a single introduction to the entire Psalter. Psalm two traces "the dominant *theme* (emphasis original; MVH) of the book—the kingship of God" (72). With such a proper introduction to the entire collection of Psalms, Futato correctly affirms that the Psalter is not a random collection of songs, but that there is a purposefulness in the content of the whole, placed in the five "books" that are the 150 songs of the Biblical Psalter. Joining the theme of instruction in the wisdom of the Torah, the kingship of God (e.g., Psalms 93, 95-99) is the motif of the realities being brought to the nations (a missiological emphasis).

Building upon the groundbreaking work of Hermann Gunkel, Futato points out in chapter 4 ("Interpreting the Categories") the importance of correctly identifying the genres of the psalms. His preferred term for genre is "category." His classifications include hymns, laments, songs of thanksgiving, songs of confidence (e.g., Pss. 16, 23, 62, etc.), divine kingship songs, and wisdom songs (a controversial category!). Category (genre) sets up certain expectations on the part of the reader, and thus misidentifying a particular psalm's category will possibly lead to a miscued interpretation.

One of the sections of this book that this reviewer read with gratification deals with seeing Christ in the various psalm categories (173ff.). Whereas some Christian writers might shy away from this topic as overly interpretive or even controversial, Colossians 3:16 enjoins Christians to

let the "word of Christ" dwell in them richly. That word includes "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," words all used in the titles of the Greek Old Testament Psalms. Futato adds (174), "When reading a psalm, it is helpful to read that psalm both as being spoken by Christ and as speaking about Christ." Taking such an exegetical stance serves as a heuristic tool to open up a variety of insights into a particular psalm. Futato then goes on to show how the various Psalm categories (mentioned above) relate to Christ as their Speaker and their fulfillment, without ignoring the Father and the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 5:18-20). Futato concludes this discussion thus: "Understanding the categories of the Psalms guides the interpreter's expectations, provides an additional level of context, and gives multiple windows through which to look more deeply into who Jesus is and what he has done and continues to do for his people" (181).

In chapter 5 ("Proclaiming the Psalms"), Futato suggests a variety of approaches that a preacher might use in a series of sermons or messages on the Psalms. He mentions a series that introduces congregations to the various categories of Psalms. A second possibility might deal with the shape of the Psalter itself ("the unfolding drama of the Five Books"). A third option might be to preach a group of integrated contiguous psalms (e.g., Pss. 46-49; 93-100; 121-134). Four steps are commended here. Step 1 is getting oriented (185ff.): reading the text and asking the questions. Step 2 is "focusing on the details" (192ff.): parallelism and imagery.

The third step is often poorly done (it seems to me), and that step involves shaping the presentation. "Clarity is essential in proclaiming the psalms," writes Futato (197), and clarity must exist in the expositor's mind and in the flow of his presentation. Outlining is a very helpful step in order to establish the logic of the psalm's thought. The fourth step (204ff.) requires that the preacher must reflect on the text and life. The "big question" that the expositor must confront is "So what?" What is the life relevancy of this psalm? Closely related to this is asking the "covenant question" (206, 207). Here we draw everything together to see the psalm addressing the basic relationships we have to God, ourselves, and others.

In the final chapter ("Practicing the Principles") Futato takes Psalm 29 and walks through all the steps he outlined in previous chapters so that the reader can see the process of responsible exegesis at work. We watch as the textual meaning is uncovered, and the reader is moved along as the relevancy for a modern audience is set forth. He places his exposition of Psalm 29 under the clever theme or heading, "The Angelic Worship of the Lord who Reigns/Rains" (222).

This book serves its purpose admirably. It provides its readers with a basic introduction to the exegesis of the biblical Psalms by laying out in a simple and straightforward fashion the several steps to interpreting and expositing the text. This book is a welcome addition to the library of exegetical guides on the Psalms. It is strongly recommended.

Two noteworthy spelling errors occur in this book. The word "though" in the last paragraph on page 163 should read "through." On the last page of text (229), "theirs lives" should read "their lives."

Futato includes a glossary of key terms, thus providing working definitions for the principal words and ideas used in Psalms exegesis. An index of Scripture references would have been helpful, but it is not included.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Nicolaas H. Gootjes, *The Belgic Confession: Its History and Sources*. Text and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought, Richard A. Muller, general editor. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Pp. 229. $29.99.

Gootjes' book on the historical developments and sources lying behind the Belgic Confession is the most recent installment in the *Texts & Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought* series, edited by Richard A. Muller. Gootjes serves as professor of dogmatology at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario, and with this volume makes a significant literary contribution to the church and especially to the English-speaking Reformed community. Even though the Belgic Confession is one of the earliest reformed confessions, dating to the sixteenth century, Gootjes acknowledges in his preface that "no comprehensive study on the background and history of the confession has been published in English." The explicit purpose of the present volume is to remedy this lack.

In his exploration of the historical developments that led to the appearance of the Belgic Confession, Gootjes pieces together the sketchy information and available documents like a skilled investigator in an attempt to reconstruct the events. He begins in the early 1560s in Doornik, a city then in the southern region of the United Netherlands, now a part of Belgium, where the Reformed believers held a large demonstration. This demonstration attracted the attention of the governess, who sent commissioners to investigate and report on the commotion. Based on the records of the report of this committee, Gootjes concludes that "the Belgic Confession first came into the open during the fall of 1561" (17). In fact, within the years of 1561-1562, there surfaced 4 printings of the Confession, with similarities and differences to one another. Gootjes admits that the relationship between these first printings is complex, but notes the fact that the production of four editions suggests both the high demand for the Confession and its recognized importance at the earliest stages.

Though it has long been assumed that Guido de Brès authored the Belgic Confession, Gootjes conducts a thorough examination of the historical sources to determine if this tradition carries weight. After evaluating the strength and credibility of references contained in Saravia, Thysius, Uytenbogaert, Trigland, Schoock, and an often neglected earlier reference in Van Tielt, he concludes, primarily on the strength of Saravia and Van Tielt, that the historical evidence does, indeed, point to de Brès as the actual author (48). Gootjes adds other evidences that point to de Brès as the author as he considers his life and other works. Gootjes also includes an extremely insightful exploration of a relatively unknown

painting, which is reproduced in the text, depicting de Brès as a significant opponent of the Roman Catholic Church.

In attempting to identify the sources de Brès employed in the drafting of the Confession, Gootjes gives fitting attention to the influence of John Calvin. He regards Calvin's influence as *indirect*, noting the effect Calvin's theology clearly had on de Brès, Calvin's connection with the earlier Gallican Confession and its subsequent influence on the Belgic Confession, and Calvin's later written approval of the Belgic Confession, though Gootjes fails to date this approval.

Calvin's influence on the Belgic Confession, even if indirect, is seldom challenged. But Gootjes posits another influencing figure from Geneva often overlooked: Theodore Beza. Gootjes convincingly demonstrates the influence of Beza and his confession on the writing of the Belgic Confession, particularly in Article 37 as well as Articles 19 and 20. On the whole, while Gootjes acknowledges that the Gallican Confession is the more influential source, he provides evidence that "seventeen of the thirty-seven articles in the Belgic Confession show smaller or larger traces of Beza's confession" (89). Of course, though Gootjes fails to mention it, this actually constitutes another indirect influence Calvin had on the Belgic Confession: namely, Calvin's influence on Beza's theology.

A major concern for Gootjes in this work appears to be the authority of the confession, an issue frequently discussed and debated. But to begin with, Gootjes is concerned with the authority of the Confession in its early historical setting, asserting that "the question of authority is to be discussed first of all as a historical question" (94). So starting with the Synod of Antwerp in 1565, he traces the status of the Belgic Confession and its authority in the churches of Holland up to the Synod of Dort, showing that it served as an authoritative and unifying document throughout the period. In the end, Gootjes offers evidence that leads him to conclude that even by the time the first copies appeared in Doornik in the fall of 1561, the Belgic Confession was already the official confession of the Reformed in Belgium (115).

Related to the issue of authority is the revision of the Confession in 1566, along with the nature of that revision, a subject that has caused rumblings even within the last 30 years in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Gootjes meticulously examines the general characteristics of the revision and concludes along with Los that the revision contained considerable changes in the text, but also with Thysius that the revision resulted in no substantial changes in *content*. He refutes the notion that the revision was primarily a shortening of the Confession. Instead, Gootjes claims that the revised version aimed not at shortening, per se, but at greater clarity (124), an aim which Gootjes sufficiently demonstrates was, in fact, achieved by the revision.

Not to be overlooked by the reader in the consideration of its authority are the frequent references to the Confession's unifying effect. This is especially important at the present time in which maintaining and upholding confessional standards is seen as divisive rather than unifying. It seems that some hope to promote unity by blurring or ignoring confessional distinctives, but the reality is that when confessional churches

neglect or ignore celebrating and instructing people in the Reformed confessional standards for the sake of promoting a broad evangelical unity, the result is not a deeper unity but a superficial unity. Indeed, unity is deepened by penetrating beneath the surface level in a shared and growing commitment to the details of the gospel as summarized in the creeds and Reformed confessions. After all, despite what people want to think, it is not simply a commitment to the Bible that deeply unites us, but a common understanding of what the Bible teaches. It is by stating this common understanding clearly and concisely that the Confessions have value in deepening our unity. Ironically, the confessional churches that wish to deepen the sense of fellowship, communion, and unity within the body of Christ by marginalizing the confessions and confessional distinctives end up neglecting one of the very tools that promotes the desired unity: a renewed celebration of and commitment to the gospel as it is faithfully summarized in the Reformed confessions.

Overall, Gootjes' investigation into the history and sources of the Belgic Confession is both thorough and convincing, and should find its place alongside similar works by B. B. Warfield on the Westminster Confession of Faith. Not only is today's lack of confessional awareness and familiarity among reformed believers lamentable, but the history behind the confessions is woefully unknown and underappreciated. Such historical explorations are important, in part, because they remind us that the Reformed confessions did not simply drop out of the sky from heaven, but rather resulted from the labors of godly believers in the church moved by the Spirit to remain committed to the truth of God's word and to unite in that truth with fellow believers, while looking to both the past and the future and trusting the sovereign Lord who works in history to guide and preserve his people. And it is the calling of each generation to remain committed to God's truth, to make good confession of the gospel as faithfully summarized in the orthodox creeds and Reformed confessions, and to promote deep and abiding unity. May this volume assist in reawakening an appreciation of how our God has been and is faithful in guiding and preserving his church in history, and stimulate us to a renewed commitment to our God, to his truth, and to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

—Brian Allred

Amy Laura Hall, *Conceiving Parenthood: American Protestantism and the Spirit of Reproduction.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. Pp. 460 ($32.00 cloth).

As inducements for reading this book, perhaps you will find its dust jacket replica of Norman Rockwell's *Benefits of Family*, and its provocative title, *Conceiving Parenthood*, strong and compelling. This work is a moral documentary, a tale both chilling and courageous. Chilling, because its story belongs, just as much as slavery and Japanese internment camps, to the identity of America—and sadder still, to the identity of mainline liberal American Protestantism. This book is courageous,

because it is the work of a tenured, academic, pro-life, feminist, *whistle blower*.

The author identifies with the Protestant tradition of American Methodism, and is associate professor of theological ethics at Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina.

Hall recounts, early in her narrative, that a bishop in her church declared that "Christian parents are morally obligated to plan for the coming of their children. The proper spacing of children is an expression of love and therefore a religious obligation." This creed easily led and leads to a psychological-social divide between children who are chosen (the planned ones) and children who simply happen to be born. This obligation seems to have become a tenet of American civil religion, one that now appears threatened by the entrance into American culture, especially through immigration from countries less prosperous and less Westernized, of those whose family ethos is less tidy.

The book is a reservoir of anecdotes, illustrations, and etchings from opinion-shaping sources like magazines, public health notices, advertisements, and product descriptions. From the 1920s through the 1960s, periodicals like *Parents'* magazine, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall's*, and *Good Housekeeping*, taught the ideals of domestic normalcy whereby people came to desire, plan for, and expect ideal families with perfect children. Everything from advertisements for the "right" baby food to nationwide contests looking for the "fittest family" aimed to advance social progress by shaming the less fit and rewarding those with class ambition. For many in twentieth-century America, middle-class domesticity, uncontaminated by blurring (read: crossing) the boundaries of race, class, education, and politics, was seen as the source of progress. The white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant family was the standard—and the hope—for the country.

Many eugenic ideas have jumped the gap from yesterday's emphasis on *social* engineering to today's emphasis on *genetic* engineering. Long after Henry Ward Beecher endorsed the social use of Charles Darwin and the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer, mainline Protestants have continued to accept the relevance and legitimacy of eugenic ideas. "The eugenics movement was germinated in a relatively elite, academic version of scientific racism from the previous century, but it took root in the heartland of America arguably as a result of two primary forces: clergy . . . and middle-class laity." Although the Roman Catholic Church has offered steady opposition to these developments, eugenics advocates regularly included Methodist, Anglican, and Episcopalian clergymen—in part to demonstrate that they were on the right side of the modernist-fundamentalist debates of the day.

"Eugenics is the self direction of human evolution," claimed one poster of a tree whose flourishing fruit was nourished from numerous roots like psychology, biology, mental testing, law, history, politics, and yes, religion. The liberals and modernists of the early twentieth century, who challenged their churches to adapt to modern circumstances, became the eugenics movement's most enthusiastic supporters. Margaret Sanger, future founder of Planned Parenthood, was a prominent member

of the American Eugenics Society. The American Social Hygiene Association was formed in 1913 to apply Darwinism as the foundation of a theory of eugenics and racial hygiene.

Protestant moral theology in modern America will be enriched by this sober narrative of the history of the American eugenics movement, and of the complicity of mainline Protestant churches blinded by acculturation. The competing narrative offered by secular science sees hope and promise in the genome experiments of this modern atomic age, which can offer us designer babies, or help us terminate babies with birth defects, or fulfill our quest for procreative gratification. In short, developments in biotechnology can help us keep life tidy.

But this new chapter in the American story of parenthood simply extends the plot line, one that has been hostile toward the Christian doctrine of individuals created as *imago Dei* (and, we would add, toward the biblical doctrine of sin). It competes directly with the gospel.

And so Hall encourages American women to offer resistance to the corporate, scientific, social agendas for domestic normalcy, recognizing that they themselves are the target audience, for example, for the AMA's guides for prenatal testing—designed, once again, to engineer the perfect family. "It is the white, middle-to-upper-middle-class womb on which the state and the market draw their sights. Our bodies have become the targets of quality control." Rather than pursuing the progress idealized by the Disney and Rockwellian icons of domestic normalcy, learn to accept the messy, imperfect, and inconvenient realities of childbearing, childrearing, and family living in a fallen world. Realize that some parents receive children who will not learn to read, who will not "get better," who will not grow up to make a name for themselves (or their parents).

Though one can find dubious claims and doubtful conclusions in the book, no one can seriously quarrel with the author's closing plea: "I pray that the book may also be of some use to the parents and grandparents and congregations who try to conceive, and reconceive, the gift of each and every new life in our midst."

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

David M. Hoffeditz and J. Michael Thigpen. *iVocab Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2007. Pp. 312. $32.99.

iVocab Biblical Greek is a practical tool that utilizes both visual and auditory learning of vocabulary. This software is designed to work with a variety of MP3 and video-capable media players, including the Apple iPod. In addition, *iVocab Biblical Greek* can be used on desktop and laptop computers (using the free QuickTime application program) and on video-capable cell phones. This is a file-based tool, using the common audio and video file formats MPEG-4, 3GP, and JPEG. These files are displayed by a number of software programs and hardware platforms. The pronunciation system used in *iVocab Biblical Greek* follows the system found in William D. Mounce's grammar, *The Basics of Biblical Greek*, with no distinction made between a Kappa and a Chi, or between the

accents. The semantic range provided for each word is not exhaustive, but provides basic English equivalents for each term.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007. Pp. 373. $25.00.

There are books that need to be written and then read, and this is one of them. In this volume, three English evangelical authors combine their efforts to offer a vigorous defense of the biblical doctrine of "penal substitution" against its modern detractors, of whom there are not a few. They write out of an awareness that, in the contemporary church, there are many who oppose the idea that God the Father gave himself in the Person of his own Son in order to suffer the death, penalty and curse due his people for their sins. The objections to this understanding of the atoning work of Christ seem to tumble out on every side. Some argue that it represents God the Father as somehow antagonistic toward his own Son. Some maintain that this view of the atonement is immoral, since it affirms the propriety of the sinless Son substituting himself for sinners upon the cross. Others insist that this is an obvious case of the "punishment outweighing the crime." Still others claim that it is inimical to the very idea of "forgiveness," inasmuch as it suggests that God is unwilling to forgive sins without having his justice satisfied. More objections than these could be identified, but these are among the principal ones, and they continue to be raised again and again in contemporary discussions of the atonement.

In order to provide a thorough defense of the doctrine of penal substitution in this context, the authors divide their discussion into two main parts. In the first part of the book, "Making the Case," five chapters consider a variety of kinds of considerations (biblical, historical, theological, pastoral) that substantiate the penal substitution understanding of Christ's saving work. In the second part of the book, "Answering the Critics," the authors address in seven chapters the most important kinds of arguments that are often raised against this view and endeavor to answer them. By following this division of the material, the reader is given a comprehensive introduction to the present debate regarding Christ's work of atonement. In a helpful Appendix, "A personal note to preachers," the authors also address the challenge of presenting the work of Christ as penal substitution in preaching. Since some popular analogies and illustrations of the nature of Christ's substitutionary endurance of God's wrath against sinners tend to misrepresent or distort the biblical teaching, this appendix aims to offer preachers advice and guidance in how to present the biblical understanding of the cross. The aim of the appendix is to encourage pastors to present the cross of Christ in a way that does not mislead or evoke the caricatures of biblical teaching that so often plague contemporary debates.

Considering what is at stake in the debate regarding the atoning work of Christ, this is an important book, which ought to be purchased

by Christian believers in general but certainly by pastors in particular. Throughout the book, the authors exhibit a rich grasp of the subject, canvass the field in a thorough manner, and offer a charitable, yet resolute, defense of the Scripture's teaching. The apostle Paul summarizes his preaching in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 as follows: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." The authors of this volume have served well the cause of the ongoing ministry of this apostolic gospel in our time, particularly in the face of the fierce and unrelenting criticism of the doctrine of Christ's suffering the penalty of God's law on behalf of his people. May this volume and others like it serve the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who was "put to death *for our sins* and raised *for our justification*" (Rom. 4:25).

—Cornelis P. Venema

Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, editors, *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. Pp. 527. $32.00.

In recent years, there has been a spate of books on the subject of Christ's work of atonement, many of which argue that the "penal substitution" view does not offer the best interpretation of Scripture and suffers from some serious theological and moral problems. According to a number of recent studies of the atonement, the idea that Christ suffered the penalty of human sin upon the cross and thereby satisfied the dictates of divine justice, owes more to the influence of medieval juridical and feudal motifs than it does to the teaching of Scripture. Not only is this understanding of the atonement biblically unwarranted, but it also represents God as though his love toward sinful human beings depends upon the prior satisfaction of his retributive justice. Since this "model" of the atonement represents the Father "punishing" his Son in the place of sinners, it tends inevitably to sanction "violence" against the innocent and commends passivity in the face of violence in human relationships. These criticisms of the penal substitution view of the atonement have a variety of sources, some biblical, some historical, others ideological. As a result, the doctrine that Christ was "put to death for our sins and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25) has fallen on hard times in a wide spectrum of mainline, "emergent," and even progressive evangelical churches.

As the title of this volume intimates, it represents another in this genre of recent books by authors who find the penal substitution model biblically, theologically, and even morally objectionable. In the editor's "Foreword," the reader is informed that what distinguishes this volume, however, is that it offers a "wide panorama of perspectives" on the atonement. What these perspectives have in common is their mutual antipathy to any doctrine of the atonement that would view the "violent" death of Christ upon the cross to be one that was approved and ordained by God to satisfy his justice. In the words of the editors, "the essays of this book provide alternative perceptions of atonement that depict God as loving,

redeeming, defeating evil, forgiving, reconciling and empowering those redeemed to know restored *shalom* and to share life with/in God through Christ" (10). To illustrate the breadth of viewpoints represented in this volume, it is instructive to note that it is divided into seven topical parts ("historical" Jesus studies, the atonement and sacrifice, atonement and forgiveness, atonement and justice, atonement and nonviolence, and atonement in relation to rebirth and deification), and consists of twenty chapters. Though some of the chapters in the book were originally addresses offered at a January, 2007, conference on "Nonviolent Atonement" sponsored by the organization, "Preaching Peace," others are selections from previously published materials that are included with the author's permission.

The most valuable feature of this volume is its unmistakable testimony to the hostility among some contemporary theologians against the historic doctrine of penal substitution. Unhappily, the fervor of the various authors' dislike for the idea that Christ's cross satisfied God's justice is not matched by an equal facility in articulating a plausible alternative. Reading through these chapters leaves the impression that virtually any alternative to penal substitution will do, so long as it does not view the cross of Christ as involving a divinely-sanctioned endurance of the penalty owed by those who have sinned against God. In addition to the absence of a convincing alternative to the penal substitution view, the contributions of the various authors widely differ in length, academic competence, and focus. For example, the chapter by N. T. Wright, "The Reasons for Jesus' Crucifixion," represents a selection from his larger work, *Jesus and the Victory of God.* Other than a loose connection with the general theme of the nature of Christ's work of atonement upon the cross, the only apparent reason for the inclusion of this chapter is that it lends an aura of academic respectability to the book as a whole. This volume exhibits a weakness often found in books that collect a diverse assortment of chapters by different authors, each of which is more or less connected with a broad, unifying theme.

Readers of this volume will benefit from the introduction it provides to contemporary discussion of the doctrine of the atonement, including the rich array of alternative models that are being advanced to explain the saving significance of Christ's death upon the cross. They will also learn how easily the idea of penal substitution can be distorted and caricatured, even described as a form of "cosmic child abuse" on the part of the Father toward his Son. However, if they are acquainted with the biblical witness regarding Christ's death on the cross, they may find it difficult to concur with the oft repeated claims that the crucifixion of Christ was not willed by God in any direct sense (cf., e.g., Acts 2:23; 1 Cor. 15:3,4) or that it did not include a substitutionary endurance of the liability due sinners who have transgressed God's holy law (cf., e.g., 1 Pet. 2:24). These features of the biblical witness, which the traditional doctrine of penal substitution set forth, are too pervasive and deeply-rooted in the whole teaching of Scripture to be as easily expunged as the authors of this volume would like to suggest they be. When properly interpreted and explained, they reveal the work of atonement to be a work in

which all three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, mutually and harmoniously achieve the purpose of redeeming sinners from condemnation and death—all in a manner that displays the unsearchable riches of God's grace, mercy and justice.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism.* New York: Dutton, 2008. Pp. xxiii + 293. $24.95 (cloth).

Tim Keller's book, *The Reason for God*, is nothing short of remarkable. In an era given to hyperbole, this may seem an unremarkable claim. It is no exaggeration, however, to say that, coming as it does from the relatively small world of Presbyterian and Reformed publications, this book, and all the hoopla surrounding it, has made a hitherto unknown impact in wider circles. By hoopla, I refer to the book tour that Keller has embarked upon, speaking to standing-room-only crowds at universities throughout America. Additionally, the book rose to number seven on the New York Times Best-Sellers List. Keller's ministry, he is pastor of a large PCA congregation in New York City, has also received a dust-jacket endorsement on this volume from Billy Graham, surely a first for someone who has taught at Westminster Theological Seminary. In short, Keller's work and the response that it has evoked in the church and the wider culture is a phenomenon demanding the attention of observers of the current theological scene.

This book is divided into two main parts: the first section is on the doubt that comes from unbelief and the second is on the reasonable faith that can meet and deal with such doubt. The first section is entitled, interestingly, "the leap of doubt." Keller purposely and provocatively assigns "leap" to doubt to demonstrate that it is not the case, as is commonly assumed, that faith involves a leap while doubt is the reasoned conclusion of rigorous thinking. Everything—call it faith, doubt, or what you will—rests on presuppositions that are embraced not because they have been demonstrated but because they are rather of the order of basic belief.

One's presuppositions, in fact, form the network of beliefs about what is most properly basic. Such a network of belief makes up a worldview and is more like religious convictions than scientific conclusions. Everyone has them, even the atheist or agnostic who proudly trumpets the unbelief that he pretends is the result of the application of the scientific method. Truth be told, the atheists' or agnostics' doubt is as properly basic as is the faith of the Christian and no more demonstrable to one holding an opposing worldview. The difference is that the Christian's worldview enjoys an internal consistency and coherency that the non-Christian's does not and that certain of the non-Christian's most basic presuppositions are actually at variance with his own world view and can be accounted for only on the basis of a Christian worldview.

Perhaps a sample of the first part of the book will suffice to communicate its flavor and to whet the appetite of the reader. In the first main

part of the book (on doubt), Keller proceeds to treat the objections as follows:

1. "There can't be just one true religion." Here Keller treats the claims against exclusivism and notes how they deconstruct themselves, being claims that also exclude certain things (like exclusivism).

2. "How could a good God allow suffering?" Here he deals with the common objections that since evil and a good, all-powerful God do not cohere, there is no god, since there is evil. Identifying and having any valid answers to the problem of evil, however, is made more problematic by the denial of God. The cross and resurrection is God's answer to and defeat of evil/death.

3. "Christianity is a straightjacket." Here Keller deals with the common objections to Christian morality, particularly sexual morality, noting that everyone has some standard, though those who reject God have trouble accounting for such a standard and it tends to be rather arbitrary. Not to mention that when it comes to morality, everyone evidences it when any harm is threatened against them.

4. "The church is responsible for so much injustice." Here Keller grants that the church has failed on various occasions but is its own best critic, having a proper basis for it in its own biblical ethics.

5. "How can a loving God send people to hell?" Here he responds by arguing that God sends no one to hell who doesn't want otherwise to go there (by wanting his own way and refusing God).

6. "Science has disproved Christianity." Here Keller responds to the claims of Dawkins, Dennett, *et al.* who claim that not only does science not support Christianity but has actually disproven it. He shows that science of this sort is not what it thinks it is but is more like religion.

7. "You can't take the Bible literally," meaning the Bible is not to be trusted historically (but perhaps the *Da Vinci Code* is?), culturally (look at its view of women, slaves, etc.) and otherwise. Keller does not seek to answer all of these questions, certainly not in detail ("a fool can ask more questions than a wise man can answer") but to reorient the reader as to the heart of the Bible's message (the person and work of Christ) and have one focus on that and look at the Scriptures from that vantage point first.

This gives a fair sampling of how Keller answers objections to and gives reason for God. One might wonder how effective all of Keller's answers to such objections are. It is the case that a number of comments on public websites, like Amazon, argue that Keller's answers are tired and hackneyed and that his defense of Christianity is thus ineffectual. Proof and persuasion, however, is not the same thing. Because Keller has failed to persuade some of his readers does not mean that he has failed to prove any of his points.

After the first main part in which Keller raises and answers objections, he undertakes part 2: the reasons for faith. He acknowledges that much doubt accompanies us all, even believers. Either we disbelieve altogether or we say, "I believe; help my unbelief." For the help of unbelief and the inculcating of faith, the second half of the book contains an additional seven chapters (and an epilogue), furnishing reasons for belief

that are often more discursive and intuitive and not of the "evidence that demands a verdict" approach. Keller's more impressionistic approach can be seen particularly when he speaks of "clues of God."

It is the case, this reviewer notes, that while Keller seeks gently to deconstruct doubt, he never affirms belief with the kind of epistemic certainty with which one might hope. Keller's approach never directly asserts the indispensability of Christianity in rendering science, logic, beauty, truth, or anything else intelligible. Nor does he stress the impossibility of the contrary: deny Christianity and everything (including all that the unbeliever wants to affirm, like science and logic) is rendered nonsense. He pays tribute in his approach to Jonathan Edwards and C.S. Lewis and his wife but not to Van Til, at least explicitly, whose approach shows that the Word of God is the only firm foundation upon which to build and that all else is but the project of the foolish man building on the sand.

Keller so mutes the antithesis at points that unbelieving readers may not be sufficiently confronted with the sharp edges of the truth that he proclaims. He is so concerned to identify himself with intelligent Christianity, and to insure the cultured despisers of it that its best practitioners are not ignorant hayseeds, that he gives unbelievers more than their due. In general he seems too willing to accommodate objections of unbelief, especially in regards to hard things like hell (he does not deny hell, but makes it so much the choice of sinners that the wrath of a holy God seems slighted). He also could do with a higher view of the church and means of grace, making explicit to unbelievers that Christ as preached in the church, with all that involves as to corporate life, is their only hope and they must place themselves under such. He does say this after a fashion, but rather too softly. On the other hand, having said all of that, perhaps Keller knows more about what he is doing than his critics might realize. I learned a great deal from him in seminary and though I think that he needs to sound a more certain note than he sometimes seems to here, one might hope that this book, its shortcomings notwithstanding, might do much good for Christ and his kingdom.

—Alan D. Strange

Temper Longman III, *Immanuel in our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship*. The Gospel According to the Old Testament, Temper Longman III & J. Alan Groves, series editors. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2001. Pp. xii + 228. $12.99.

The great Saint Augustine explains the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments well when he said: "The New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed" (vii). The series of which this book is a part seeks to show how the gospel of Jesus Christ is already contained and presented in the Old Testament. Believing in the "fundamentally Christocentric nature of the Old Testament" this series has the following three aims: (1) "to lay out the pervasiveness of the revelation of Christ in the Old Testament"; (2) "to promote a Christ-centered

reading of the Old Testament"; (3) "to encourage Christ-centered preaching and teaching from the Old Testament" (ix).

For all ministers and believers who seek to preach and know Christ from all the Scriptures this series promises to be a great help and stimulus!

And this volume does not disappoint! Old Testament worship often seems so foreign and far removed from us. What contributes to the difficulties are the fact that the prescriptions and descriptions of Israel's worship are not contained in one place but are spread out through various books, and even in various different passages of one book. So this makes it difficult to form a complete picture. It is in light of this that Longman's book is so helpful. He brings together all of Scripture's teaching on the subject and in very clear and easy to understand language explains the different faces of Old Testament worship.

He explains Old Testament worship under four great headings: Sacred Space, Sacred Acts, Sacred People, and Sacred Time. In Part One he explains how "God, the King, created sacred space for his presence on earth" (1). In this section he deals with the beginnings of the idea of sacred space in the Garden of Eden, and how it is worked out in the rest of the Old Testament in Altars, the Tabernacle, and the Temple. He also has a very helpful chapter on all the Furniture of the Sanctuary showing how each of these enforces the idea of the Holy presence of God among his people. This first part concludes with a chapter on the coming of Immanuel and how all that was symbolized in the Old Testament was fulfilled in him.

In Part Two dealing with Sacred Acts, the focus falls exclusively on the Old Testament sacrifices. Although there was more to Old Testament worship than merely sacrifices, Longman focuses exclusively on sacrifices because they are the most foreign to us today and also were the most important part of Israel's worship since it pointed out that before sinners can enter the holy presence of God sin must be recognized and atoned for (75). After briefly explaining the three functions of sacrifices, namely atonement, gift, and fellowship (77-79), he explains each of the five sacrifices found in the opening Chapters of Leviticus, showing how each brings out one or more of these functions. The final chapter of this section shows how Jesus fulfilled in various ways all that these sacrifice pointed to.

The role of the Priests is discussed in the Third Part dealing with Sacred People. Their calling, their distinctive lifestyle and their various tasks are all explained. Again this section ends with a chapter showing how Jesus is the "Ultimate Priest" fulfilling all the Old Testament shadows (151).

In the final section, Part Four, Longman deals with the Sabbath, and other feasts of the Old Testament showing how Sacred Time was spend in worship. After briefly explaining each feast, he points to the New Testament connections showing how each feast anticipated the Messiah, and was fulfilled in Christ.

I found this book very inspiring and stimulating. Not only do we have an easy to understand explanation of Old Testament worship but we also

have the lines drawn explicitly to Christ! For anyone seeking to understand Old Testament worship and its fulfillment in Christ this would be a great place to start.

One aspect of this book that at first troubled me was the fact that he used mostly the *New Living Translation* for the extensive biblical passages he quotes. But as I read I began to see its benefit. The long explanations of worship practices found in the Old Testament are easier to understand in this translation. The author though is not bound to any translation as becomes clear in his discussion of the sacrifices where he prefer to use transliterations of the Hebrew words since no English word adequately explains the meaning of each term.

I highly recommend this book for preacher and laymen alike! Preachers will find lots of material for preaching Christ and layman will definitely grow in their love and understanding of the Old Testament. This book will also be great to use for Bible Studies, but it must be noted that not all the questions given at the end of each chapter are suited for this since many of them seem to be merely for personal reflection.

—Jacques Roets

John R. Muether, *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman.* American Reformed Biographies, eds. D. G. Hart and Sean Michael Lucas. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008. Pp. 288. $24.99 (cloth).

This latest installment in the *American Reformed Biography* series is a joy to read, whether one is an ardent Van Tilian or not. If not a Van Tilian, the reader can still come to appreciate the life of humble service rendered by this able servant of the Master. As a Van Tilian, this reviewer is that much more pleased to see how deftly author John Muether has woven together Van Til's career as an apologist with his commitment as a churchman. Van Til was a churchman devoted to Reformed orthodoxy, a point that especially needs to be made in a day when those who have departed in some measure from such orthodoxy (like some Federal Vision partisans) would claim Van Til as their own. At the same time, there are others (like some followers of Gordon Clark) who would claim that Van Til himself, as an apologetical innovator, departed from orthodoxy and that his less-than-orthodox FV followers are merely being faithful to that heterodox legacy.

Muether gives the lie to both of these claims as he patiently and carefully shows that Van Til's original contributions, particularly to apologetics, can be seen generally as a proper development of the Reformed faith, proceeding along the lines of a Reformed, and not some other, trajectory. He shows time and again in this biography that Van Til's project was about being faithful to the Word of God, about being a consistent Calvinist, in apologetics as well as in soteriology. Calvinists are typically theologically robust, making and pressing the case for the total depravity of man and the absolute sovereignty of God. However, though such Calvinists would never soft pedal the effects of the Fall when it comes to anthropology and soteriology, they often do when it comes to epistemology, and act as practical Armininians in the carrying

out of the apologetical task. Van Til simply called for a consistent Calvinism in which our utter dependence on God was properly recognized not only soterically but also epistemically. Muether represents this point well in his biography, which, it should also be noted, while sympathetic to its subject, is properly critical and never devolves to mere hagiography.

Muether's approach to Van Til, however, is not primarily intellectual, which is to say, he does not undertake to give us a detailed treatment of Van Til's apologetic. Those seeking that here will be disappointed. That has been done ably elsewhere by apologists like Frame, Bahnsen, Oliphint and others. Muether does elucidate, here and there, to be sure, the basic outlines of Van Til's thought, but he does so in the context of Van Til's life, a life lived primarily teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary. From 1929 until his retirement in 1972 (and, in some ways, until his death in 1987), Westminster was Van Til's home. And that meant that for all those years, Van Til was devoted to training men for the gospel ministry, many of whom entered the adopted church of Van Til, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It was in the church and the seminary that Van Til labored and gave his life.

For those unfamiliar with Van Til, or who know him only as a fiery controversialist opposing currents of antithetical thought and arguing for a radical biblical grounding of all thought and life, Meuther's volume might serve in a measure to furnish us with "Van Tilianism with a human face." For those who know and love Van Til, and who know that he was not only an ardent apologist, but also a passionate preacher of Christ and partisan of a Vosian redemptive historical approach, rich dividends await in tidbits about and perspectives on Van Til that Muether has uncovered. This is an admittedly friendly review that would continue no further, but rather urge all readers to "take and read," as did the mysterious children at play in Augustine's hearing. While no conversions are promised, Muether's work should assist us all in taking a better measure of the man Van Til and why he remains so important in our day, and in the coming years, for the church.

—Alan D. Strange

Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology*. Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology, Craig A. Evans and Lee Martin McDonald, general editors. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Pp. 247. $19.99.

Pedantry is always a temptation to professors, some more than others (this reviewer especially). Hopefully, an observation on the title of this book will serve a useful purpose and not be merely an exercise in pedantry. "Reformed and always reforming," as this book is entitled, is purportedly a slogan emerging from the Protestant Reformation, though no one seems able to trace its origins. This is a rather common way of translating the Latin phrase, "*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*." A more accurate translation—something like, "the reformed church, always to be reformed"—brings out the passive voice better, an important and not merely pedantic note: the church has been, is being, and will be reformed

not merely by our attempts at *aggiornamento* but by the Holy Spirit's divine work of gathering and perfecting the saints. Too often, "always reforming" is taken to mean that we, and not the Sovereign Spirit, reform the church.

The mantra, and it has become such in many circles, of "always reforming" serves as justification for almost any ecclesiastical innovations nowadays. Let a theological professor produce a book or essay that can rightly be argued to undermine the veracity of Scriptures. He, and others in his defense, will cry "always reforming," as if that slogan were a charm that wards off all legitimate opposition. What's also interesting about the phrase is its first part—"reformed" (or, better, "the reformed church"). Many invoke the phrase "reformed and always reforming" whose commitment to being reformed in the first place is, at best, dubious. Both a misuse of "always reforming," and no commitment to being "reformed" in the first place certainly mark the volume under review.

Roger Olson is an admitted Arminian and thus wears the title "reformed" uneasily. And "always reforming" throughout his book seems to mean that anything that he or his fellows do is warranted because, after all, they are only carrying on the grand tradition of "always reforming," which phrase seems to have become a theological shibboleth and is probably fairly taken to mean "anything goes" as far as "evangelical" novelty is concerned. Olson and his fellows, it should be noted, as practitioners and not simply observers of postconservative theology, are often quite defensive about it and yelp loudly when anyone questions their *bona fides* or asks how it is that what they are propounding as postconservatism is truly something worth believing and not just warmed-over, repackaged, "liberalism light."

Postconservatism is variously defined throughout the book, appearing as somewhat of a moving target, taking elements of "progressive" conservatism and liberalism and combining them with postmodernism. Olson knows whereof he speaks as the one who apparently pioneered the term postconservative. As a professor of theology at Truett Theolgical Seminary, Baylor University, Olson had for some years been a keen observer of and participant in this movement of those (called postconservative here) who wish to retain an evangelical identity while embracing many features of post-modernism. Perhaps what is meant by postconservatism is more clearly gathered by those whom Olson sees as heroes and villains: the former would include Stanley Grenz, John Franke, Clark Pinnock, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Lesslie Newbigin, while the latter would include D. A. Carson, David Wells, Carl F. H. Henry, and, especially, postconservatism's favorite whipping-boy, Princetonian Charles Hodge, who is scored at every opportunity for ruining everything with his, and B.B. Warfield's, insistence on the inerrancy of the autographa, one of the chief regrets of postconservatives.

Although this reviewer disagrees with the basic premise of the book—that postconservatism is a biblically faithful development of evangelicalism—thinking rather that postconservatism is a departure from biblical evangelicalism, the book is nonetheless to be commended to our readers as quite useful. Written as it is by one of the leading partisans of post-

conservatism, one is given a fair glimpse into the movement and its developments by one who is not only sympathetic to it but also has been a key player in it. In this case, it is better to hear it "from the horse's mouth" so as to get the fairest portrayal of it, particularly on the part of our readers, who from a sound Reformed perspective are well-qualified fairly to judge it and render a reasoned assessment.

Though the book is rather repetitive, the reader may well find the repetition helpful as Olson seeks, from complementary perspectives, to drive home the primary concerns of the post-conservative movement: that postconservatism, as a matter of style, aims to be less conservative than the evangelicalism of the 20th century (particularly in terms of biblical inerrancy and dogmatic precision, e.g., backing off of a penal substitution view in terms of the atonement or moving in a direction friendly to "open theism"). Additionally, Olson affirms numerous times the following sort of postconservative positions: the essence of Christianity is transformation not information (the life lived is more important than the doctrine believed); postconservatism is committed not to the canons of theology as developed throughout the history of the church but to a "fresh reading of the Word" (the Bible is atomized and all its diversity is privileged over and pitted against its organic unity); and that postconservatism is more interested in narrative and story in the Bible than in deducing theological propositions from therein.

Now what may be commended about all of this—as we ask ourselves the question, "have we anything to learn from this movement?"—is that postconservatism furnishes evangelicals the occasion to recognize that elements have crept into our evangelical theology, particularly in the American context, that may be extraneous to it and certainly are not the heart of it: political elements ("the evangelical church is the right-wing of the Republican party at prayer") and cultural elements (holdovers from early fundamentalism such as anti-intellectualism or strictures against certain "worldly amusements" like the use of alcohol, films, etc.). Indeed there has been too much identification between evangelicalism and certain social and political programs (evangelicals oppose not only abortion—rightly—but many support an unfettered capitalism or all American wars as if that were part and parcel of the gospel).

Evangelicalism, as it would seek to rediscover and recover its roots, would find them in the revivals of the 18th century and for whatever, particularly ecclesial, shortcomings were then present, older evangelicalism of this sort represented a commitment to biblical Christianity and generic Calvinism. Perhaps postconservatism can help us to recall the heart of this older evangelicalism so that gospel truth can more clearly and effectively be propagated, shorn of political, cultural and social elements that have come to be associated with it but are not definitive of it.

All that having been said, the criticisms that this reviewer would level against postconservatism have already essentially been made: it not only departs from extraneous elements of evangelicalism but from its very heart—biblical fidelity to the person and work of Christ, historically construed as the sole way of salvation. Like the postliberalism of George Lindbeck and others, postconservatism denies the absolute exclusivity of

Christianity: that faith alone (due to God's grace alone) in Christ alone as taught in the Scripture alone is the sole way of salvation (and hell is downplayed if not practically denied). In the end, then, this postconservatism seems to adopt some views from older liberalism and mix them with postmodernism, yet lacks the courage of its conviction to be styled "liberal."

This reviewer, in fact, found himself time and again, in reading Olson's anti-dogmatic musings, thinking of J. Gresham Machen and *Christianity and Liberalism*. In that work, which even a recent issue of *First Things* calls the "fundamental text of Protestant complaint" of the twentieth century, Machen, as the article goes on to note, insists that "liberalism is not the necessary result of Protestant theology and practice" but comes, rather, "from the changes of the modern age and the fearful notion of some Protestants that they must warp their religion to match their times" (August/September 2008, p.31).

This observation by *First Things* editor Joseph Bottum sounds as if it could be made about the postconservatism of Olson and others: "always reforming" does not seem to mean "always to be reformed" so as to be transformed by the Word, but rather it seems, in truth, to mean "always conforming" the faith to suit the prejudices of this world. Postconservative evangelicalism, in seeking to be, as it sees itself, a kinder, gentler evangelicalism that better reaches a needy world, has rather become just another echo of the world and a stark reminder that, as Martin Lloyd-Jones said, when the church seeks to be most like the world, she does the world the least good. Let the church not be culturally captive—indeed—either to a "conservative" or "liberal" agenda (apart from the Word), but let it be captive to God's Word and bring that Word in all its vigor to a world that never needs merely an echo of itself but the other-worldly message of salvation in Christ.

—Alan D. Strange

Peter J. Schakel, *Is Your Lord Large Enough? How C. S. Lewis Expands Our View of God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008. Pp. 208. $16.00.

Peter J. Schakel invites his readers to grow in their understanding of God through a study of what he calls the "imaginative theology" of C. S. Lewis. In Chapter 1, he begins with the searching question "Is your Lord large enough?" He then demonstrates how Lewis seeks to impress readers with the incomprehensibility of God in his writings and challenge them to grow in our conception of him. Next, Schakel leads the reader through a study of various topics some of which include prayer, love, the church, providence, suffering and heaven as treated in the varied works of C. S. Lewis. Each chapter includes study questions that invite readers to discuss the thought of Lewis along with passages of Scripture. Schakel concludes with several appendices that give a brief biography of Lewis, an overview of his thought and a catalogue of his works.

The depth and breadth of Schakel's grasp of Lewis' writings and thought will impress the reader. This author is uniquely qualified to write such a work. In 208 pages, Schakel treats readers to a tour of C. S. Lewis

and his works that will delight lovers of Lewis' work and leave them wanting more.

In his writings, C. S. Lewis leads his readers to contemplate the ancient truths of our faith and, especially, the God of our faith in fresh and creative ways that deepen our understanding and appreciation for them. *Is Your God Large Enough* effectively connects readers to the thought of Lewis for that purpose.

Because this book is largely based on the thoughts of one man and his "imaginative theology," readers can expect to disagree with its conclusions at points. For example, Lewis' theology of time and how unbelievers can be saved through Christ apart from faith warrant criticism. Schakel himself challenges the thought of Lewis at points, though not often. Let the reader and leader of groups discern.

Is Your God Large Enough is well-suited for college and university study groups as well as others who enjoy the works of C. S. Lewis.

—Richard Zekveld

Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 990. $44.99 (cloth).

The daunting prospect of reviewing a book of nearly a thousand pages is relativized when compared to the effort invested in writing and editing a book that size. So we begin with our congratulations to Dr. Schreiner and Baker Academic for this superb demonstration of their collaborative skills.

We must confess to having read the Appendix near the end of the book first, because here the author sketches the history of the discipline of biblical theology, together with the uniqueness of and rationale for his own contribution to the field with this volume. Clearly his aim of providing an accessible guide for students and pastors is both illustrated and met in this closing essay.

But what about the accessibility of the other 970 pages? That depends largely on the author's ability to express clearly what he believes to be his unique contribution. By Schreiner's own account, the uniqueness of his volume is formed by his Christocentric exposition of various NT themes (e.g., kingdom, law, obedience), coupled with his salvation-historical approach toward explaining these themes. This approach roots these themes in OT revelation and is thereby compelled to deal with issues of continuity and discontinuity in the history of salvation. An added feature of this massive exposition is that it is well-watered from the reservoir of contemporary sources with which he interacts (identified in concise footnotes and ample bibliography).

All of these features persuade us that this book ought to enjoy wide reading among pastors and theological students. "The thesis advanced in this book," so goes the author's opening line, "is that NT theology is God-focused, Christ-centered, and Spirit-saturated, but the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit must be understood along a salvation-historical timeline; that is, God's promises are already fulfilled but not yet consummated in Christ Jesus" (23). This biblical-theological bud blossoms,

throughout the rest of the book, into a varicolored flower of stunning proportions.

If "doing" NT theology in the past yielded results that resembled systematic theology in a new dress, or sounded like discordant theological voices (John, Paul, James), this attempt has the feel of integrated harmony, a truly progressive unfolding of the Bible's story. Jesus is not only True Israel, but he is also True Adam, doing what both Israel and Adam had failed to do. The parables and miracles recorded in the Gospels cannot be nice stories and nice deeds—they need to be Christocentric, revealing the person and work of Jesus-Christ-Messiah-Son-of-Man-and-Son-of-God. Each NT epistle needs to be understood in terms of the Holy Spirit's application of the work of Christ to church life in a situation-specific-yet-universally-normative manner.

The book's four parts, of unequal length, develop the theme of "promise" as a category for integrating NT teaching. The study begins with a three-chapter presentation of a standard approach to the Gospels, entitled "The Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises: The Already—Not Yet." The inauguration of the kingdom of God and of eternal life supplies the eschatological orientation for unfolding NT teaching in subsequent chapters. Part 2 offers a ten-chapter overview of the Trinitarian character of salvation history, entitled "The God of the Promise: The Saving Work of the Father, Son, and Spirit." After reviewing the prominent attributes of God in the NT, especially divine sovereignty in fulfilling his promises, Schreiner moves to the personal center of NT teaching: Jesus Christ the Son of God. With delicate skill he weaves together biblical data concerning Jesus as the New Moses, as True Wisdom, as a Prophet, and as a miracle worker. Nine chapters later, the Trinitarian complex of redemptive activity culminates in a description of the Spirit of God as the Christ-serving and Christ-applying Power of redemption and renewal.

An important turn is made in Part 3, where Schreiner considers "Experiencing the Promise: Believing and Obeying" (three chapters). The NT writings are canvassed with regard to the problem of sin and with regard to faith and obedience. The reader may enjoy an excellent sample lesson in the author's method and approach, as he discusses "The Law and Salvation History" (chapter 16). The coming of Jesus Christ affected the function of the Law, since he manifested himself as the True Interpreter of the Law and, just as importantly, as the Perfect Keeper of the Law. Issues of continuity and discontinuity in the Law's application come into view here, along with the phenomenon of continuing Law-observance on the part of Jewish Christians in the NT church. Freedom from the OT law did not require the Jews to ignore the OT law—witness the apostolic participation in temple worship and rituals (Acts 3:1, 18:18, 21:21-26). It was the imposition of such worship and rituals on Gentile believers that the apostles opposed as being contrary to the sufficiency of Christ and of divine grace. Schreiner sets forth clearly the salvation-historical understanding of the law-as-Israel's-tutor or "babysitter" (Gal. 3:24-25) in the context of the argument of Galatians 3-4 as a whole, noting that the phrase "under law" refers to the old era in salvation history. That era was characterized by imprisonment under sin (Rom. 6:14-15), "for grace and

law stand in contrast to one another in the history of salvation. It is not the case that grace was lacking under the Sinai covenant, for God graciously freed Israel from Egyptian bondage" (648). With respect, then, to the need for continued observance of OT laws, the essential contrast that the young Christ-believers needed to grasp was between the "old" situation and the "new" situation created by the incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The OT law found its terminus, its goal, in Jesus Christ, and must now be interpreted and applied in terms of his person and work.

Part 4 concludes with a well-rounded presentation of "The People of the Promise and the Future of the Promise." Schreiner correctly ascribes power to the divine promise, since that very promise by its nature creates a people for God's glory, carries a people toward God's destination, calls a people to God's service, and consecrates a people with God's holiness. The mission and identity of the church of Jesus Christ are defined by that promise. The leadership and gifts of this church are supported by, and in service to, this saving promise. The means of grace (preaching and the holy sacraments) communicate this promise effectually.

Herewith a number of discrete concluding notes. (1) As we review the strengths of this work, we are encouraged by its emphasis on the Christocentric character and content of NT revelation. Given this excellent integrating paradigm, Schreiner might have expanded its relevance in discussing the parables of Jesus and the kingdom, by locating the heart of the parables more explicitly in Christology (though in a footnote on page 169 the author mentions the possibility of an implicit Christology in the parables). (2) Schreiner shrewdly (and correctly) notes the biblical emphasis on the redemptive significance not of Jesus' virgin *birth* but of his virginal *conception*. (3) To the interesting question: Could Jesus have atoned for our sins as a ten-year-old? Schreiner replies: No, for at that young age Jesus would have lacked the maturity and experience as a human being to suffer for the sake of his people. He had to experience the full range of temptation and resist allurements to sin to qualify as an atoning sacrifice (388). (4) Throughout this book very little Greek is used, and when it is used, it appears only in transliteration. One wonders why, in a book of this kind, if the Greek is worth mentioning, it appears only in transliterated form. (5) When the author discusses baptism in the context of the church as the people of the promise (696-697), it puzzles us that three time he refers to Acts 2.38 while ignoring Acts 2.39 (". . . for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself"). Would not Acts 2:39 compel us to acknowledge children of believing parents as members of the people of promise?

For pastors and theological students who are looking for a contemporary and competent presentation of NT teaching integrated by the unfolding story of Jesus Christ in terms of his divine person and saving work, this volume will serve admirably for many years of stimulating study and preaching.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2007. Pp. 232. $18.95.

This book is an outgrowth of five Bible expositions that were originally given at the annual conference of the European Christian Mission in 2002. Wright's overall theme had been the topic of "Knowing God." This book completes a Trinitarian set that includes the books *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (19) and *Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament* (20). C. J. H. Wright is the director of international ministries for Langham Partnership International/John Stott Ministries.

The five original lectures developed into this nine-chapter book. Wright's chapters are entitled the following:

1. Knowing God as a Father in Action
2. Knowing God through Experience of His Grace
3. Knowing God through Exposure to His Judgment
4. Knowing God as the Father of His People
5. Knowing God through Engaging Him in Prayer
6. Knowing God through Reflecting His Justice
7. Knowing God through Returning to His Love
8. Knowing God in Expectation of His Victory
9. Knowing God through Trusting in His Sovereignty

As these chapters suggest, Wright is quite aware of the several divine attributes that emerge in Old Testament revelation. Therefore, he does not resort to any kind of reductionism (e.g., "God is *only* love") in his treatment of the Biblical text. Rather, by means of attention to several passages, personages, and Biblical books as a whole, Wright puts before the readers in a balanced way the various dimensions of who God is and what he does in revealing himself as Father to his people in the older covenant era.

In addition, it is clear that Wright approaches the material with a broader theological context in mind, specifically the Trinitarian confessional backdrop that is the heritage of historic Christianity. He alerts his readers to such already in his introduction (13ff.). The God whom the Israelites addressed is the one and only God, but the fullest Scriptural revelation presents us with that one God who is three Persons. Yet that fullest revelation was not clearly present in the older covenant era. Still, the Old Testament is not entirely silent about the persons of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The God who revealed his Name to be Yahweh is the Trinitarian God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. According to Wright (15), "it is certainly true from a whole-Bible perspective, that the God Yahweh of the Old Testament 'embodies' (if that is not too human a word), the Son and the Holy Spirit. But on the whole it is probably more appropriate in most cases that when we read about Yahweh, we should have God the Father in mind."

There is sufficient material in the Old Testament to have us conclude that the ancient covenant people of Israel recognized that God was the Father of his people. The usual Biblical idiom regarding the deity, how-

ever, does not use that term in a highly personal or intimate way. Note, for example, the absence of such intimate idiom in the Psalms (but cf. Ps. 89:26). The way Jesus addressed God—and so taught the disciples and the church—represents an advance in the relationship between God and his people. When you pray, say, "Our Father," Jesus taught us. As mediator, Jesus was both true God and true man. He prayed to God as his Father in both a covenantal as well as a Trinitarian sense. "So in the consciousness of Jesus the *scriptural* identity of God as Yahweh and his *personal* intimacy with God as his Father must have blended together," says Wright (17).

One idea with which some readers may take issue in Wright's discussion, is his assertion that "the language of parenthood, in both genders, is explicitly used in relation to God as early as Deuteronomy 32:18" (19). Thoughtful readers would agree that God as the creator of humanity and its genders, transcends such categories of gender. Wright wants to balance the book's emphasis on God as Father with the several passages where a motherly image of God is present (e.g., Deut. 32:18; Ps. 27:10; Isa. 42:14; 49:15). The last-named passage (to cite only one), Isaiah 49:15, does not in fact use a specifically motherly ascription to God. Rather, the passage, when read in full context, clearly shows that God is greater in his love and compassion than any human mother. Truly God transcends anything that any human father and mother can display (cf. Ps. 27:10). The God revealed throughout the pages of the Old Testament richly displays "love, care, compassion, provision, protection and sustenance" (19). Such is God the Father.

Another important element in Wright's discussion is to contrast the revelation of who God is with the religious worldview of most, if not all, ancient pagans. In paganism the idea of myth, the timeless story outside of history, thoroughly permeates their religious beliefs. But the one true God reveals himself as the God who acts in his history with and for his people. This comes to fullest expression in real history when God the Father sends God the Son to earth in the incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ.

God as sovereign Father is not above rebuking his son Israel for rebellious, faithless, and deceitful behavior (see Isa. 1:2-4; 30:1,9; Jer. 3:4-5, 19-20). Yet the covenant relationship between God and his people provides a context for hope that looks into the future. "You can break a covenant, but you can't stop being a son of your father," says Wright (84).

Building on this idea, Wright shows how Israel as covenant son provides a paradigm for what the messianic king is to be as well. He points out that "Israel's king was not to be a *super-Israelite*, lording it over his subjects, but a *model Israelite*, setting them an example of what it meant to be an obedient son of Yahweh" (92). This is the burden of Deuteronomy 17:14-20 (cf. Pss. 1, 2, 72). At the same time, Israel's actual kings fail as (adopted) sons so that prophets point out a coming messianic era in which the messianic son will rule as "Everlasting Father" (among other messianic titles; p. 97). Wright explains this title as appropriate for the

divine son because "it must refer to the governance dimension of his role", a title no less bold than the preceding title: "Mighty God" (97).

Wright sets forth the intimacy of God's relationship with his older covenant era friends, Abraham (104ff.) and Moses (120ff.), using Genesis 18:17-19 and Numbers 12:6-8 as the textual starting points, respectively. The author points out how God shares his plans with them, and Wright then concludes that God takes these close friendships "very seriously," a relationship that has "integrity and respect on both sides" (131).

Chapter 6 provides readers with an excellent discussion of Jeremiah 9:23-24 and 22:13-17. Knowing God as Father is concretized when God's people practice that in which the LORD delights, namely, kindness (*hesed*), justice (*mishpat*), and righteousness (*tsedaqah*). The oppression of the weak and innocent is a vile evil that the LORD despises. Wright pointedly asks, "Where does this leave our limp evangelical pietism, or our suspicion of all forms of social engagement, or the rationalizations by which we excuse ourselves from the ideological and practical battlefields of economics?" (147). Thus the Christian community today cannot know God as Father "without the exercise of justice and compassion" (151).

This truth of divine engagement in the midst of our history also comes to the fore in the life-story of the prophet Hosea. Wright deals with this in the chapter that discusses returning to God's love (153ff.). Students of the Bible have long debated the nature of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, e.g., was she an actual immoral woman at the time of the marriage, did she become immoral later on, or, was this only a vision, etc. Wright says that, to reflect the historical reality of God's love for a sinful people, Hosea "did not join a society to debate the social evils of prostitution. Nor did he theorize about possible strategies for the uplift of fallen women. Nor did he simply complain about prostitutes, or even merely take pity on them. He went and married one" (158). That scandal is a picture of the even greater scandal of the gospel, when God the Father sends the Son into the world to die and save a wayward and sinful people. Here is where the knowledge *of* God transcends mere knowledge *about* God. "Knowing God means knowing what *God* has done, knowing it was done *for me*, and knowing the *response* I should make," says Wright (158).

The author's discussion of Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog and Magog) may be one of the more provocative chapters in this book, especially to those of a dispensational bent in their eschatology. The prophet Ezekiel could well be subtitled "Knowing God," Wright avers (184). That is the main point that must not be lost in all the usually fruitless speculation about end-of-history scenarios. Says Wright, "The primary and repeated point of the double chapter narrative is that Yahweh will be fully, finally and victoriously revealed in his true identity and in the justice of his ways. That revelation will be both to his people and to all nations on earth" (190).

The final chapter of this book turns readers' attention to Psalm 46 as the place to consider the great sovereignty of God. This theme is tied in with Habakkuk 1, where the prophet is made to wrestle with the "problem" of God's plan to use a wicked nation to punish his own people. God "reserves the right" to do this (205). God is quite able to use even the

wicked to accomplish his purposes of justice and judgment in history. But the bottom line is that "God's people will survive. They will never be obliterated. The Lord knows those who are his. And those who are in Christ are in the only totally safe place. Eternally" (212).

The book is not written in a highly technical manner. Indeed the author has succeeded in maintaining the oral style that was part of the original lectures. The absence of technical discussions of the original language makes this a book easily accessible to the literate layperson. The theological depth of the author permeates his discussions at every turn, thus rendering this book a rich source of insights into his discussions of various biblical passages. The book reads as a semi-devotional treatise of the subject of God the Father of the people he loves. Here is theology that feeds the soul in an immediate way, without getting sentimental. Pastors and church members will be rewarded in picking up this work and meditating on the various topics that fill out a Christian understanding of who God is as our Father. Wright's book is highly recommended for pastor and layperson alike who are looking for a book that reminds us who God is as our heavenly Father, but which does so in an engaging and spiritually uplifting way.

One syntax error appears to be a transposition of "to" and "and" in the last line of the first paragraph on page 164. One glaring factual error is on page 219 where he links the events of Daniel 6 with Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, Daniel was in the service of a certain Darius (the Mede) in the Persian, post-Babylonian period. The book includes a Scripture index, but there is no subject index.

—Mark D. Vander Hart