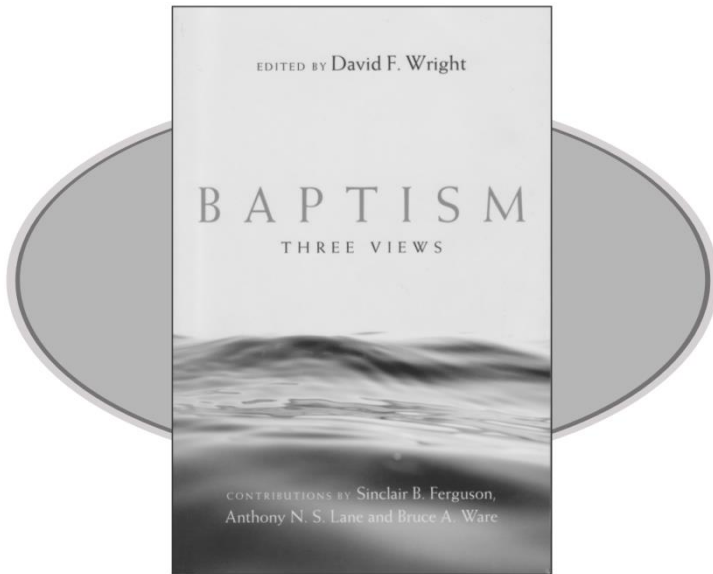


Book Reviews

***Baptism: Three Views.* Edited by David F. Wright. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009, 200pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3856-1**



There has often been a close and valued fellowship among believers holding differing views on the question of baptism. This has been especially so in recent years. Often speakers representing different positions share the platform at conferences. But on the whole it has been felt prudent to avoid the subject in such fraternal assemblies.

Each of the three contributors to this book sets forth a distinct position – that of the credobaptist (supporter of believer=s baptism) is represented by Prof. Bruce Ware of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, and that of the paedobaptist (supporter of infant baptism) is represented by Sinclair Ferguson, now minister at First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina. A novel third position called the Duel Practice View is advanced by Prof. Anthony Lane of the London School of Theology. Unfortunately due to ill health, the editor, who had done much work on the

project, was unable to provide an introduction; and this task had to be performed by Daniel G. Reid. We are informed that David Wright died before the work was published.

The plan of the treatment is first, an essay (about thirty pages) by one of the contributors. This is followed by two evaluations, one by each of the other protagonists. Finally the writer of the essay gives a concluding response. This pattern is repeated for each position. By this means, it is intended to give the reader a good assessment of the merits of each side in the debate. It makes for very interesting reading.

Sinclair Ferguson in his main essay provides a superb statement of the Reformed paedobaptist view. This is acknowledged by both of the other contributors. Bruce Ware, though in disagreement with it, gives this appraisal: "It stands as one of the finest and most able defenses I have read. I believe that it helps demonstrate how some, indeed many, find this view compelling" (p. 113). Anthony Lane's response is likewise appreciative. He says: ". . . a very able exposition of the Reformed covenant theology approach to infant baptism. Almost I am persuaded – but not quite" (p. 121). Anyone, then, looking for a good statement of the Reformed paedobaptist theology on this matter will find it here.

It is important to note that there is a lack of consensus as to the import of baptism. As Ferguson says, "Explanations of its meaning sometimes differ radically. Without grasping this radical difference in interpretation, isolating the issues involved in the baptismal debate proves virtually impossible. To a certain extent participants in the debate talk past one another" (pp. 84-85).

Bruce Ware gives a spirited defense of the credobaptist view. He contends that the Greek words *bapto* and *baptizo* mean immersion. And he asserts that immersion implies that the subjects were not infants and that therefore adults alone are to be baptized. This is a common method of treating the subject by antipaedobaptists, but it introduces a needless element of confusion into the debate. There is a significant history of the immersion of infants in the history of the church. On the other hand, the early Baptists excluded infants but did not insist on immersion. Presbyterians recognize the validity of all three modes (aspersion, sprinkling and immersion), but have generally preferred pouring or sprinkling. In the New Testament, the word *baptizo* is used of the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost. The word *baptismos* is used of the sprinklings of the Mosaic economy (Heb. 9:10). In our view, the issue of the mode of baptism should be discussed separately.¹

The relationship between baptism and circumcision is central to the discussion of this subject. For Ferguson, baptism has "the same symbolic significance in relation to fellowship with God as did circumcision" (p. 87). Prof. Ware says that circumcision functioned on two levels, one in regard to "the ethnic and national distinctiveness of Israel" and the other in respect to

¹ An excellent biblical study on the mode of baptism may be found in John Murray's book, *Christian Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992).

“the true and spiritual Israel” (p. 45). He says that the new covenant pertains exclusively to the people of God, those who profess faith. But the historic Reformed view is that the new covenant is essentially a new dispensation of the covenant. It is imposed and there are curses as well as blessings. It is a serious thing to be a covenant breaker. Infants of believers are bound by God=s covenant, and that is why they should be baptized.

Prof. Ware appeals to the number of instances of adult baptisms in the book of Acts as proof of the credobaptist view. However, it must be noted that the difference is not over whether adults were baptized but whether infants were excluded. He holds that since infants cannot believe, inward spiritual life is not possible (see pp. 27-28). Ferguson makes a response to this in the following words: “If so”, he says, “infant salvation is impossible, and it is difficult to know what to make of the Spirit=s work on the humanity of our Lord and his forerunner John while each was in his mother=s womb” (p. 56).

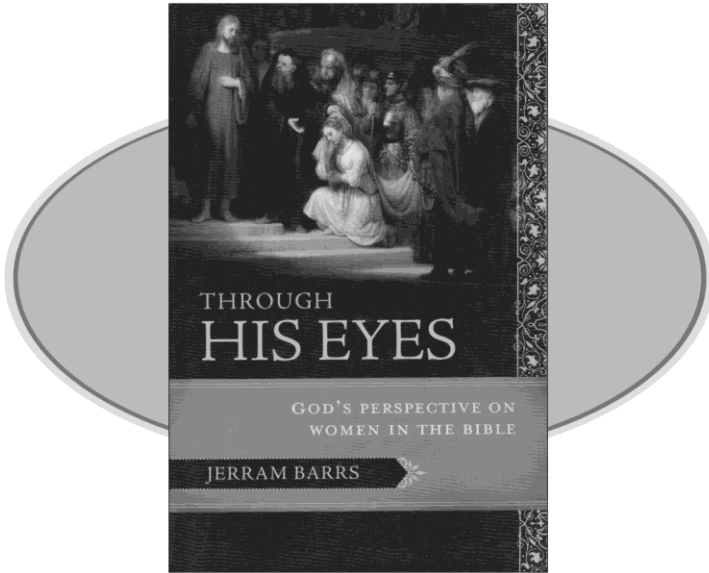
Professor Anthony Lane presents a novel approach – the Duel Practice View. He has a very good analysis of the evidence of the early church regarding the subjects of baptism and shows how concerns over the forgiveness of post-baptismal sin affected the practice of the church in the third and fourth centuries. He makes the point that while evidence of infant baptism may be limited, there is never any indication that it was regarded as improper. He compares a researcher on this subject to a seismologist in New York who can detect an earthquake in Los Angeles. Applying this analogy to the early church, he thinks that the fact of different practices suggests dual practice in the time of the Apostles. At its best, the theory falls short of biblical authority.

It is doubtful that the book will go far in settling disputes on this controversial subject. However, it provides much material for reflection, and it should be helpful to students in showing how each side deals with the questions involved. The format with its essays and responses makes for a very valuable discussion.

Reviewed by Rev. William R. Underhay, a retired minister of the Free Church of Scotland, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Rev. Underhay is a graduate of Victoria University College, University of Toronto and the Free Church College, Edinburgh.



Through His Eyes: God's Perspective on Women in the Bible.
Jerram Barrs. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009, 352 pp., paper.
ISBN 978-1-4335-0224-8



Throughout history and from culture to culture, the role of women in home, society and church has been fiercely debated. The treatment of women has varied and continues to vary according to an understanding and appreciation of our place in each of these three spheres. Many women reading this introduction will immediately articulate, at least mentally, how they are viewed, by men in particular, and will be able to draw a direct link between those views and the experiences of their lives so far. Jerram Barr's work in *Through His Eyes* carefully and lovingly attempts to set forth the biblical disclosure of God's view of women and His particular care and understanding of this part of creation that He has fashioned. Jerram Barrs is founder and resident scholar of The Francis Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.

The book is divided into twenty-one chapters. Each chapter is a study of a particular portion of Scripture, most centering on a woman in the Bible. The first three chapters deal with Eve as Barrs uses the study of Eve to set forth the basic premise of his book concerning God's perspective on women.

I suspect chapter one may be easier for many to ascent to than chapter two. Chapter one deals with Eve at creation. Barrs explains that God created Eve from Adam to be his equal, his helper and his complement. "This creational likeness and complementariness is the foundation for monogamous, lifelong marriage" (p. 20). Then comes chapter two and an

exposition of Genesis 3:1-24 whereby the author explains the seven-pointed curse of the law. When he gets to his fourth point, there is an obvious depth of pastoral understanding: “The impact of the curse on Adam is to ‘rule over’ his wife (Genesis 3:16), to turn his headship into domination. This is the temptation of men in general, to treat a wife – whom he should regard as his equal and partner – as ‘his woman,’ to use her like a servant, to regard her as an object for doing his bidding or for meeting his needs for sex, companionship, food, laundry, a comfortable home, a source of pride before other men” (pp. 34-35). How many of us have seen this in the church, not to mention the world?

Following studies on Eve at Creation and Eve at the Fall, Barrs looks at Eve as “the Bearer of the Promise of Redemption”. He writes: “One of the great wonders of this promise is that in his kindness, mercy, and gentleness God tells the woman Eve – the one who listened to Satan’s deceitful lies – that she is the one through whom this deliverer will come into the world” (p. 52). The kindness, mercy and gentleness of God become the themes for the rest of the book as Barrs carefully tells the stories of Sarah, Tamar, Rahab, Deborah, Naomi, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Tamar, Esther, Mary, the Samaritan woman, Mary and Martha. In each case, I was challenged and greatly encouraged.

Barrs explains in his introduction that he originally gave these studies to a group of women at a church in his home city. The encouragement the Lord brought to them as they heard of His care and love for the women of the Bible prompted Barrs to publish his work. Barrs comments, “One particular example that stands out in my memory was that the study of the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon encouraged women to be able to talk for the first time in their lives about sexual abuse they had endured, a couple of them fifty or sixty years before” (p. 9).

Readers will be curious to know how Barrs views the passage in Act 2 where Peter quotes the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-18). This is certainly where Barrs will be challenged by many in conservative circles who teach that woman can only learn from men and are never to be in a reciprocal relationship whereby men might learn from them. Barrs carefully sets forth the reasons that this is a false premise and then concludes with very strong language: “This is the height of spiritual arrogance and a denial of the nature of Christ’s kingdom for a man to say that he cannot and will not listen to or learn from a woman. Will such a man remove the works of Deborah or Hannah or Mary from Scripture? Does such a man deny that he can learn anything from his mother, from his sister, from his wife, or from his daughter? . . . Peter declares that the prayers of such a man, who does not acknowledge that his wife is joint-heir of the grace of life, are hindered” (pp. 311-312).

The next logical question is, “Does Barrs go on to deal with ‘the restrictive passages?’” He answers this question by explaining that he has

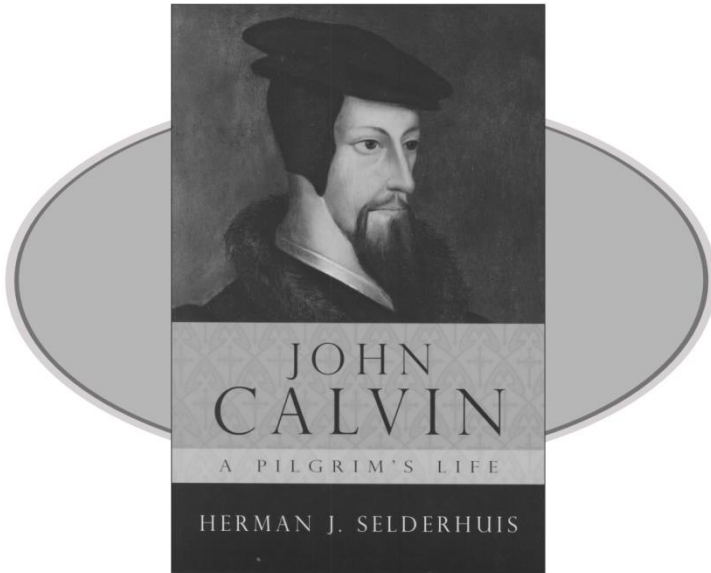
taught on these passages, as have many others, in various settings and his views can be accessed on the Covenant Seminary website. He did not include them in this book because he wanted to look at the more extensive material concerning God's care and respect for women that is included in the Bible yet often neglected. I believe the appendix, "A Wedding Sermon for Eve and Adam after the Promise of Redemption", is helpful in maintaining the balance of this book and in giving the reader an insight into Barr's commitment to approach the Word as an organic whole. In one of his footnotes to this chapter, Barrs sums up his position, "It should be evident from the first chapter of this book that I believe both in the equality of men and women in marriage and in the structure of headship that God has given in marriage" (p. 340). You really must read the book to see how beautifully these themes are unfolded.

The book has a lovely layout that makes it ready to use as a group study; each chapter is followed by questions for discussion and Scripture reading in preparation for the next chapter. The questions are not directed exclusively toward women, and it is clear that Barrs hopes many men will take up this study and be edified. The Scripture index and the general index are helpful. The endnotes definitely add to the depth of the text. I do wish it was a hard back as paper backs are more difficult to work with when one is flipping from endnotes to text to indexes, etc. I join Barrs in his obviously sincere desire, "My prayer is that the Lord will use this book to be an encouragement to both women and men, for we all need to see women through God's eyes" (p.11).

Reviewed by Nancy J. Whytock, Haddington House



***John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life.* Herman J. Selderhuis. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009, 259 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-2921-7**



The year 2009 being the 500th anniversary of the Genevan Reformer's birth, there has followed a great spate of books treating Calvin's life and career. If the curious Christian had never before taken time to read a volume treating this great man of Christian history, the centenary year has surely provided a suitable occasion. But *where* was a curious reader to begin given the avalanche of choices?

The book under review by Herman Selderhuis, the esteemed Reformed church historian of Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, (a book which is itself a part of this literary outpouring connected with the centennial year) is probably *not* the right starting point for one looking to read a first book on Calvin's career. But if you have previously read a standard biography of Calvin, Selderhuis' *A Pilgrim's Life* would make an excellent follow-up. This historian, aiming at the reader who already has a rudimentary knowledge of the stages of the Genevan's life and activity, provides the kind of "colour" material that better helps us to see Calvin as a three-dimensional person – a man of strong feeling, of vivid memory and warm friendship. And strikingly, Selderhuis does this almost entirely reliant on Calvin's massive surviving correspondence with friends across Europe. The difference can be illustrated *thus*.

We see more clearly Calvin's *humanity*. Every biographer of Calvin will

tell us that he suffered the loss of his mother while still a young boy, of his father while still a young man, and his native country (France) through exile shortly thereafter. Selderhuis, through a long familiarity with Calvin's correspondence, is able to show us how these early experiences left such an impression on the Reformer that he regularly referred to them in his dealings with others. Similarly, the indignity suffered in his forced exile from his adoptive city, Geneva, in 1538 and the pain he felt at the death of his wife, Idelette, in 1549 were items that he referred to again and again when consoling and advising others. How good to realize then that Calvin had much more to him than preaching, writing and debating. There was this tender side also.

Further, Selderhuis helps us to see Calvin's *stridency*. Regularly overruled by the city government, Calvin would use his pulpit and his pen to tell his version of things. Where colleagues and contemporaries differed with Calvin or would not see things his way, there was often a price to pay. Some friendships ended when Calvin's counsel was not heeded; sometimes very long-standing correspondence was nearly cut off without explanation.

What emerges from *A Pilgrim's Life* is a portrait of Calvin which – while characterized by loyalty and admiration – is free from excessive adulation. The author feels no obligation to take Calvin's part in any and every confrontation in which he found himself. Selderhuis, working from within the conservative side of the Dutch Reformed tradition, shows a commendable fascination with how Calvin's preferences and traits have often been transmitted to the church tradition at the head of which he stands. According to Selderhuis, we have Calvin to thank for the preference for psalm-singing, the maintenance of home-visits by elders prior to Sundays on which the Lord's Supper is administered, and also for the great readiness to "split" with former comrades over issues deemed to be of great principle – which have often characterized the Reformed tradition.

All this deserves high commendation. The Calvin 500 festivities of 2009, whatever they may have succeeded in advancing by way of modern appreciation for the great Reformer, have not significantly expanded our ability to draw *critically* on Calvin's life and career. As the celebratory year draws near to an end, we are left too much at the mercy of persons and authors whose approach to Calvin and the Reformation is, at bottom, one which commends a drawing of the sixteenth century into the twenty-first. On this plan, our great need is to be and to live more like sixteenth-century people. Selderhuis' sane approach properly recognizes the distance of time and culture which separates modern Protestant Christians from Calvin's time (such that we cannot simply copy it). We justifiably no longer consent to the burning of witches and heretics. He pinpoints also the operation within the Reformed tradition of a kind of "law of unintended consequences" which has sometimes yielded effects other than were originally intended. Thus, today Calvin's emphasis on extreme austerity and simplicity in houses of worship

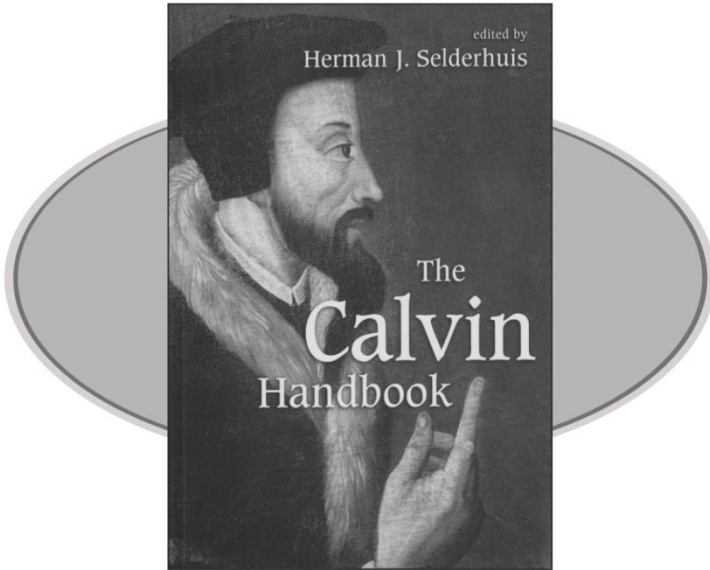
and the ordering of services can hamstring his modern followers in coming to terms with a culture very different from that of four centuries ago.

Read a standard biography of Calvin. There is much to be learned from established works such as that of Williston Walker (1906), Emmanuel Stickelberger (1954), Jean Cadier (1960), T.H.L. Parker (1975) and Alister McGrath (1990). But when you have digested one, take Selderhuis as your second and observe how the combination makes for a sane and balanced whole.

Reviewed by Kenneth J. Stewart, Professor of Theological Studies at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia, since 1997 and the author of two books and the forthcoming Ten Myths About Calvinism (IVP, 2010). He is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in America and has a Ph. D. from the University of Edinburgh.



***The Calvin Handbook.* Edited by Herman J. Selderhuis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 585 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8026-6230-3**



When I was in theological college, the “Calvin handbook” of the day was John T. McNeill’s *History and Character of Calvinism*, which Oxford University Press first released in 1954 and has kept in print ever since. It has served quite well for two generations, but I suspect its day has now passed with the translation into English of *The Calvin Handbook* under the editorial hand of one of the finest living Calvin scholars today, Herman J. Selderhuis. McNeill’s volume reflects the knowledge and ability of one man in creating such a single Calvin handbook, and he certainly was knowledgeable. Yet Selderhuis’ work has the obvious advantage of amassing a group of internationally renowned Calvin scholars whereby their area of specialization is brought into the whole. It would be difficult today for one writer to produce the same depth that these scholars as a collective whole have brought. I liken this new work to a great sympathy of musical specialists, each well-trained on a particular instrument and for a particular part but united by the steady ear, heart and hand of the master conductor. *The Calvin Handbook* reads like one is hearing a finely led symphony orchestra under the master conductor, Herman J. Selderhuis. I have yet to find discordant sounds from the symphony contributors – and what an impressive list they are – fifty-eight in all.

The Calvin Handbook basically does three things: it gives a biographical overview of John Calvin; next, it unpacks Calvin’s theology; and, finally, it

attempts to explore the influence of Calvin, all “based on the most recent research” (p. viii).

After a brief twenty-two page section, “Orientation”, on “images” of Calvin, the works of Calvin and the state of Calvin research, the book proceeds to the biographical section. This is organized under headings, the first of which is “Stations” and includes four categories: France and Basel, first stay in Geneva, Strasbourg and the second stay in Geneva. After “Stations” (pp. 23-56), still in the biographical section, comes “Historical Connections” (pp. 57-124), which looks at Calvin’s connections in nine geographical areas, beginning with Wittenberg and ending with the British isles. The biographical (“Person”) section then concludes with “Theological Relations”, reviewing this through the themes of the Church Fathers, Humanists, Jews, Anabaptists, Opponents and Students. Missing here was Calvin’s theological relations with fellow Reformers because this was really covered under “Historical Connections”. The biographical section of the handbook is outstanding. It is well-organized, readable, concise in bibliographical suggestions and accurate in content.

Next follows an overview of Calvin’s theology through three categories: the types of works he produced (e.g. sermons, commentaries, letters, etc.), the themes of his theology and the structures of his theological argument. The types of works section reads well and again provides an excellent introduction to Calvin’s literary output. I have formerly kept Bierma’s translation of W. de Greef’s *The Writings of John Calvin* beside me when thinking through the types of material written by Calvin. This section in *The Calvin Handbook* now places much of this into a larger single volume. Thus in terms of textbooks for class work, perhaps one can now work with one book, namely *The Calvin Handbook*. Under “Themes” in Calvin’s theology, fourteen themes are included, and those familiar with the contents and order of the four books of the *Institutes* will see a pattern which is most helpful. Again, we now have within one volume a thematic summation and analysis of the main themes in Calvin’s theology. This is good for teaching, especially if one does not want to overwhelm a class with several works. There are no major gaps in almost 140 pages dealing with the themes of Calvin’s theology. I personally found it to be more even than *A Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes: Essays and Analysis*², which came out in 2008.

The section on “Structures” in Calvin’s theology is one of the shortest in *The Calvin Handbook*, which should be the case in such a handbook. This area of structures has been somewhat debated historically by theologians. The contributors here state their material, and some readers will feel their points were not elucidated completely. It is not the heart of the handbook, nor does it deserve more space.

² Reviewed in the *Haddington House Journal* 2009, 98-100.

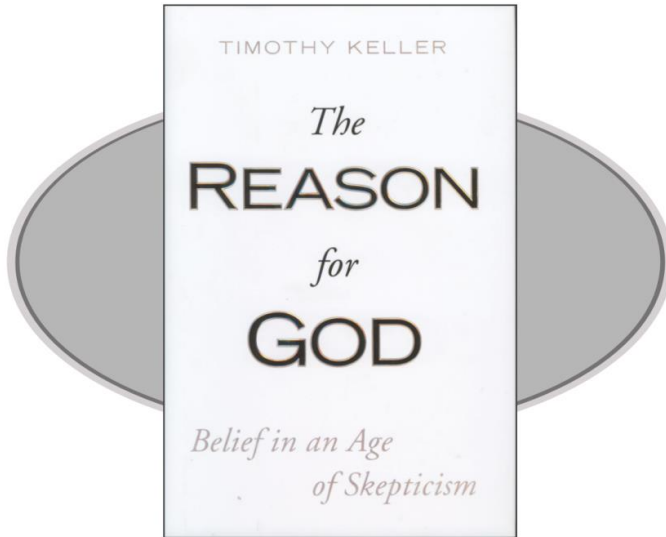
The third and final section is that very elusive one at times, “Influence and Reception” (pp. 397-526). In many regards, this can be where the opinions of readers will differ the most. The contributors have generally tried not to simply become embroiled in their agenda and debate their points of view. A handbook should acquaint readers with the overall contours, and then the writer is free to offer his conclusions. Generally this was followed, such as in the much debated area of Calvin and his influence politically.

There are eight themes of influence that are taken up: the law and canon law, liturgy, art and literature, education and pedagogy, politics and social life, science, marriage and family life, and spirituality. This is followed by an examination of Calvin’s influence “Historically”, starting with Reformed Orthodoxy; then by century (eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth) – a most daunting task; then in Africa, Asia and America. If I were to make a slight criticism of this book, it would be only with this third part on Calvin’s “Influence and Reception”. Yet, I find myself hesitating here because I think this section is more subjective and much more difficult to chronicle. For example, Australia/New Zealand is noticeably absent; “America” appears to almost exclusively be the United States of America; and many would no doubt wonder if Africa receives a full enough scope.

Overall, *The Calvin Handbook* receives full marks and will no doubt remain a ready standard in the field for the next several years. I heartily recommend it for a textbook for pertinent courses. Theological colleges will need to purchase it for their libraries – it will be a must. The bibliographies concluding each section are concise, the indices are well done and the extensive bibliography at the end will be most useful as an up-to-date basic bibliography (thirty-six pages is actually “basic” for this subject!).

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock, Haddington House

***The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism.* Timothy J. Keller. New York: Dutton, 2008, 293 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-525-95049-3**



Though Keller's book is addressed to unbelievers, particularly atheists (though it speaks to those of formal non-Christian religions too), it is well worth reading for Christians. Those who learn nothing new from his arguments may learn from his style. Even skeptical reviewers applaud him for dealing with them and their views respectfully, courteously.³ Using this approach on a day to day basis for doubters he encounters in New York, Keller is seeing converts.

Some unconvinced doubters claim he oversimplifies and sometimes fails to look at the strongest forms of some arguments against Christian belief.⁴ Keller's book covers a wide range of material. To avoid complaints of oversimplification, he would have to write a book for each chapter, and even then some would think he should have been more thorough.

³ E.g. Holly Wielkoszewski, "Serious and Measured Consideration", February 5, 2009. http://www.amazon.com/Reason-God-Belief-Age-Skepticism/product-reviews/1594483493/ref=cm_cr_pr_link_next_3?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&pageNumber=3.

⁴ Holly Wielkoszewski, "Serious and Measured Consideration", February 5, 2009. http://www.amazon.com/Reason-God-Belief-Age-Skepticism/product-reviews/1594483493/ref=cm_cr_pr_link_next_3?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&pageNumber=3.

Some also accuse him of poor logic and simply of failure to prove the existence of God.⁵ However, Keller explicitly says that proving the existence of God to an unbeliever in the sense that the argument compels belief is impossible (p. 120). Only as God's Spirit removes the blinders of sin will an unbeliever see a "proof". It appears to me that for the most part the complaints of poor logic rest on failure to look at Keller's goal. The critics assume he is trying to prove God's existence. In fact, he is only trying to show the failure of arguments against God's existence and that there are good reasons for belief in God.

A big plus for the book is that it is very easy to read. While Keller deals with profound issues, he does not get into convoluted reasoning but makes it clear and simple.

The author divides the book into two sections plus an introduction, an "intermission" and an epilogue. The introduction and epilogue are important in themselves, while "The Dance of God", the last chapter of the second section, deserves its own major heading. That chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

The introduction sets the scene by relaying Keller's experience in inner city New York and the way he himself came to know God. He starts with the reality that both faith and skepticism are growing in our culture. Then in part one, he looks at seven of the most significant skeptical challenges to Christian faith and answers them. However, it is not enough to answer the challenges. He goes on in part two to look at seven positive reasons for recognizing God and following Him, showing dilemmas people must answer before they can claim their rejection of God is reasonable. The last chapter of part two, "The Dance of God", argues that people should *want* to believe in the God Who reveals Himself in the Bible. He is immensely attractive, and He alone gives hope and meaning to this world. The epilogue addresses skeptics who may now be considering commitment to Christ; lays out the gospel; warns against some easy, deceptive paths; and encourages them to trust in Him.

In the introduction, Keller makes an observation that shapes much of the remainder of the study: "All doubts, however skeptical and cynical they may seem, are really a set of alternate beliefs. You cannot doubt Belief A except from a position of faith in Belief B. For example, if you doubt Christianity because 'There can't be just one true religion', you must recognize that this statement is itself an act of faith. No one can prove it empirically, and it is not a universal truth that everyone accepts" (p. xvii).

Keller repeatedly shows that doubts about Christian belief start with premises that are self-contradictory. If "there is no truth" (as many claim today), then that statement itself is not true, which means there is truth. An argument that discredits itself does not have any force against belief in God.

⁵ Peter, "A disturbing look into the evangelical Christian mindset", March 24, 2008. http://www.amazon.com/Reason-God-Belief-Age-Skepticism/product-reviews/1594483493/ref=cm_cr_pr_link_next_2?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&pageNumber=2.

Chapter one explores the objection, “There can’t be just one true religion”. Keller points out that this statement is just as exclusive and just as unprovable as the affirmation that Christianity (or Islam, etc.) is the only true religion. It is a religious claim that insists that all other religious beliefs are false. If making such claims is wrong, then this objection is wrong.

Chapter two looks at the problem of suffering. Keller notes that while we may see no reason for it, no justice in it, that does not mean God has no reason or is unjust. If God is big enough to be held responsible, He is big enough to be beyond our comprehension. Keller argues that “Evil and Suffering May Be (If Anything) Evidence *for* God” (p. 25). That section heading is unfortunate and leads some astray. In fact, Keller does not argue that the evil itself is evidence for God but that our *awareness* of it being evil is evidence for God. From the point of view of the atheistic evolutionist, the word “evil” should be meaningless – “natural selection *depends* on death, destruction and violence” (p. 26). So the recognition that something is evil points beyond natural selection to God. But so what? What do we say to the person who has lost a loved one or otherwise faced pain and is angry with God? Keller points us to Christ, God taking on our flesh to suffer with and for us in order to redeem us. God cares for us in our suffering more than we can imagine, and in the end He will take it all away from His people. We will find that our trials have made our future life infinitely more joyful. Is this a superficial answer to the problem of evil? Much more could be said; many books have been written on just this subject. However, Keller’s discussion is not superficial in that he both points out fundamental flaws in the argument that the existence of evil shows that the God of the Bible cannot exist and points out the way to comfort for the sufferer.

Against the accusations that Christianity is a straitjacket, is culturally rigid, is limiting and is not inclusive, Keller makes an interesting point: “Christianity has taken more culturally diverse forms than other faiths” (p. 45). People of every culture have found a home in Christ’s church. That speaks of an openness that no other faith can match. Further, as he points out, the people who object to the limits the Bible puts on our behaviour find it necessary to put limits on other people’s behaviour at least in some degree. What happened to their claim that such limits are unacceptable?

But how can a loving God send people to hell? Keller points out that the concept of a personal, loving God is found only in the Bible. Those who reject belief in Christ because He condemns people to hell are rejecting the basis of their complaint. No other religion proposes a God of such personal love. Here we see a second argument regularly used by Keller. Often the attack on Christian faith rests on views whose only foundation is the Christian faith. To attack God because of such views is to saw off the limb on which you are sitting.

Keller answers other objections such as the injustices done by the church, the idea that science disproves Christianity and the challenges to the

trustworthiness of the Bible.

If we agree that the arguments against Christian belief are flawed, that does not prove that Christianity is true. Similarly, we cannot demonstrate these arguments in a way that will compel people to believe. Keller says that in place of proofs of God, we should look for “the clues to his reality that he has written into the universe, including into us” (p. 123). We should look at the world and ask which world view best accounts for it.

In the second part of his book, Keller directs our attention to things that point us to God; among these is our sense of beauty and purpose and our rational thought. Naturalistic evolutionists argue that these traits are mechanical, merely present because they have a survival value. He turns their argument on its head by pointing out that if there is no God, if we are just the accidental result of an evolutionary process, then our idea of reason exists only because it has survival value, not because it is true. That means we have no reason to trust our reason, unless we look to a God Who made a reasonable universe!

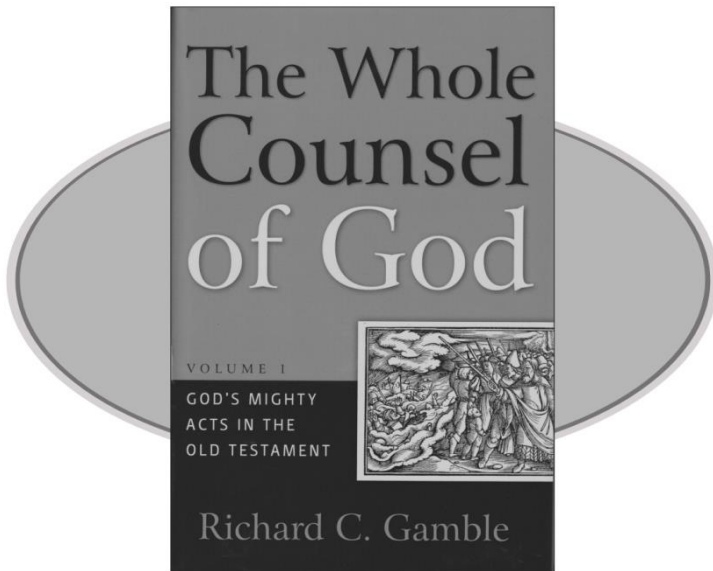
As Keller moves towards the end of the book, he increasingly points to the beauty of God. In the end, he declares that if we understand it, we should *want* the Christian message to be true. The author looks at the resurrection, not only presenting reason for believing it happened but also noting that it affirms that this world matters. He shows that the Christian message reveals provision for dealing with the sin, the evil and the failure we all see in ourselves. There is motivation for looking very seriously to see if it may be true.

The book presents a multi-poled approach. First Keller shows that the major challenges to Christian belief are not strong; indeed most of them are self-contradictory. Then he shows that there are good reasons for believing in the God revealed in the Bible. He finishes by highlighting the attractiveness of God, offering an implicit answer to those who say, “Fine, but I don=t really care”. All in all, it is a book well worth reading.

Reviewed by Donald A. Codling. Rev. Codling recently retired as the minister at Bedford Presbyterian Church, Bedford, Nova Scotia, where he served for over twenty-five years. He continues to serve as the Stated Clerk of the Eastern Canada Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America.



***The Whole Counsel of God, Volume One: God's Mighty Acts in the Old Testament.* Richard C. Gamble. Philipsburg: P&R, 2009, 719 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-87552-191-6**



It must be said at the outset that this review is provisional. Its subject is volume one of a three volume work. To be fair to the author, comments on this first volume must be considered as open to revision when the set is complete. However, as it will be a few years before that time arrives, some words of description and comment must be made in order to be fair to prospective purchasers of the book at hand.

In terms of physical description, this book is a well made hardback intended to be used. Its page size, font, font size and layout are easy on the eye, allowing readers to focus their attention on the content. Footnotes appear on almost every page. These notes are in a much smaller font size than the main text yet can be read without difficulty.

The book opens with a table of contents and an analytical outline. Both are helpful in themselves; yet, even bringing the two together leaves out some very useful information. From the former, the parts (1-5), the chapters (1-30), and the page number on which each chapter begins can be ascertained. In the latter, the structure of the book is outlined by being broken down into parts, chapters, sections and sub-sections. Many of the sections are strong enough units in themselves to warrant further study for their own sake. While the titles of these various divisions are found in bold print in the text of the book, the numeration used in the outline (e.g., 5.29.I.A) is not. Leaving

the numeration out of the text does make for a tidier page; but, it also removes one way of locating information quickly. To a reviewer, this is a slight annoyance. However, to students, burning the midnight oil over an essay, it might prove a cause of stumbling. Readers who make repeated use of this book will more than likely pencil in page numbers beside the headings listed in the analytical outline.

Following these introductory aids, the reader enters into the body of the work. Part one deals with methodology. There are discussions of biblical theology and systematic theology. Part two deals with revelation in the period from Creation to the Flood. Topics covered include six day creation and Framework Theories (Gamble rejects the latter), anthropology, the Fall, and the covenants made with Adam and Noah. There is no mention of a Covenant of Works. Part three deals with the period of Abraham and Moses. Covenant is a major subject in this part of the book, as is ethics. There are brief studies of the Patriarchs. There is an exposition of the Ten Commandments. Brief introductions to the last three books of the Pentateuch and a chapter on Old Testament ecclesiology bring part three to a conclusion. Part four deals with the days of the prophets and includes the Wisdom Literature. The bulk of this part is made up of introductions to the remaining books of the Old Testament. There is then a “theology proper” of the Old Testament which covers the person and works of God as revealed in these Scriptures. While this is the largest part of the book in number of pages, it also covers most of the Old Testament. There is not much detail in these introductions. Part five deals with Israel’s response to the mighty acts of God done in the Old Testament era. Here are discussions on faith and righteousness and on the church/world divide. The volume concludes with a Scripture index and the person and subject index. There is no bibliography.

The Whole Counsel of God is a title which raises expectations. The blurb on the back cover gives expression to these expectations by stating that the author “offers a comprehensive theology attuned to the methodological advantages of biblical theology combined with the strengths of historical and systematic theology”. Does the book live up to them? Alas, the answer is no; or, at least, not in this volume alone.

This book is a series of introductions. It is an introduction to a theological method which is shaped by biblical theology. It is an introductory biblical theology of the Old Testament, much of the content of which parallels that found in an introduction to the books of that Testament. It introduces and then, as it were, walks away leaving readers to carry on the conversation with this “comprehensive theology attuned to the methodological advantages of biblical theology combined with the strengths of historical and systematic theology” whom they have only just met. This is where the inclusion of a bibliography and some suggestions for further reading would have made all the difference. Perhaps they will appear in a later volume.

Of course, the most important of these introductions is that of the author’s proposed theological method. To flesh out the brief summary of the contents

of the book given earlier, the first two chapters of part one end with a summary expressed in six propositions: foundational to all theology is “inscripturated revelation”; theology cannot ignore general revelation; systematic theology cannot be taught by the unregenerate; biblical theology is indispensable to systematic theology; systematic theology is different from biblical theology; and systematic theology must be regulated by the principles of biblical theology. The third chapter comes to the conclusion that the method to be used is one in which systematic theology is structured around the history of special revelation.

When this method is applied in part two, the author begins with creation and then moves on to anthropology. As he treats the subject of man, he addresses the issues of man as a bipartite or tripartite being (he says the former) and the imputation of Adam’s sin. This is done by way of short topical essays which draw on later – i.e. New Testament – revelation. Creation and the Fall are the prolegomena, and the narrative is supplemented by such later revelation as is required to set the scene for what was once termed the unfolding drama of redemption.

In parts three and four, the application changes in that there are much fewer supplementary topical sections. Here the book becomes much more of a biblical theology textbook with the material divided generally under the headings of faith, law and ecclesiology. There are occasional uses of later revelation: e.g., when the author discusses the case of that righteous man Lot. However, the incident of Abraham’s offering up of Isaac is treated typologically, and the exegesis is not informed by Hebrews 11 or James 2. Then, in keeping with the author’s presuppositions, theology proper comes at the end of part four where the accumulated information of God’s self-disclosure is summarized. There is not much historical theological discussion in this volume, but there are hints of more to come in later volumes.

This book seems to have a problem with finding its level. Parts one and two assume and demand more of readers than do parts three, four and five. On page 90 the author says, “The idea that God is epistemologically foundational to human knowledge, and the notion that the differences between God as Creator and humanity as creation are epistemologically important, are not new concepts in systematic theology.” Then on page 680, he says, “Someone who thinks that God does not exist is called an atheist.” Perhaps the spread of the intended readership is so wide that not everyone can be addressed at the same time. For those involved in theological education, the usefulness of this volume might well decline as the book progresses; whereas, for readers simply wanting to come to terms with the Old Testament, its usefulness might well increase as the book progresses.

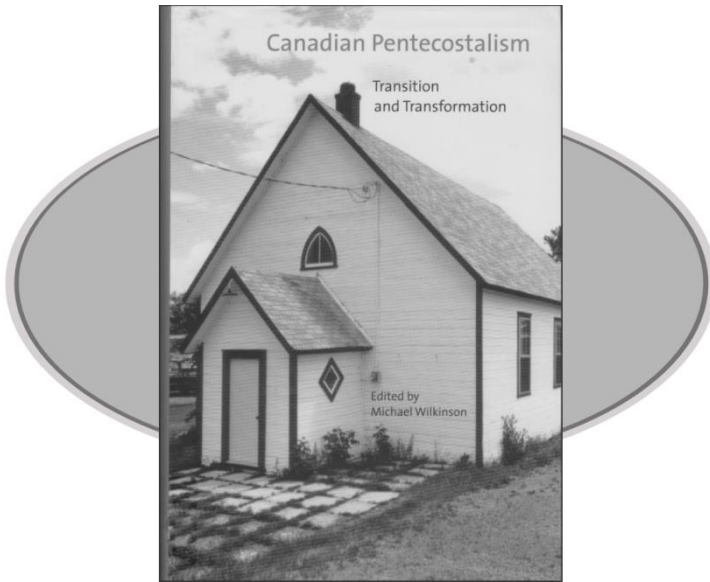
If the prospective purchaser is looking for an accessible biblical theology of the Old Testament, then this book is well worth buying. If, on the other hand, the prospective purchaser is looking for the Holy Grail (the set of volumes which will follow creedal development and the formulation of

doctrines over the centuries and bring the results of that search into interaction with perspectives of biblical theology), then it might be well to wait until all three volumes are available before coming to a decision.

D. Douglas Gebbie is a regular reviewer for this journal. Rev. Gebbie is a native of Scotland and was educated at Glasgow College of Technology and the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. Before his induction to the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC) in Chesley, Ontario, he served Free Church of Scotland charges in Raasay and Achiltibuie and pastored the PRC's congregation in Portland, Oregon.



Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation.
Edited by Michael Wilkinson. Montreal: McGill-Queen's
University Press, 2009, 308 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-7735-3457-5



Appropriately titled *Canadian Pentecostalism*, this book provides a helpful overview and introduction to the development of Pentecostalism in Canada for many outside the movement. The book is arranged as a series of essays written by a variety of scholars who write from their particular fields of study including history, sociology and theology. The editor, Michael Wilkinson, is an associate professor of sociology at Trinity Western University and has written *The Spirit Said Go: Pentecostal Immigrants in Canada* (p. xii). The unifying concern that brings these short essays together is the attempt to answer the questions about the origin of Pentecostalism, the distinctiveness of Canadian Pentecostalism and the tension that exists within Pentecostalism between being “spirit-led” and “organization driven” (p. 6).

The book is organized into three main sections. Part one deals with the origins and development of Pentecostalism. The focus of this section is to understand that early Pentecostalism should not be mistaken as synonymous with present-day Pentecostalism. Part two moves on to the various aspects of the Canadian Pentecostal experience and describes for the reader what this movement looks like in practice. The final section looks at the institutionalization and globalization of Pentecostalism and highlights the impact of the movement.

Michael Giacomo recognizes that it is necessary to frame the discussion of the origin and development of Pentecostalism by providing a definition of the movement. He explains that the most common characteristic of Pentecostalism is its emphasis upon the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, especially speaking in tongues. It is for this reason that some have defined Pentecostalism as the actual experience or practice of speaking in tongues (p. 15). However, this definition is shown to be lacking. Pentecostalism is now five generations old and has been institutionalized, yet the reality is that not everyone who attends Pentecostal churches speaks in tongues. Giacomo proposes a broader definition that takes into consideration the many that practise speaking in tongues but have no affiliation with traditional Pentecostal denominations (p. 16). This broader definition recognizes three waves that are linked by a common spirituality and yet are very distinct movements (p. 16).

The first wave of contemporary Pentecostalism may rightly be called classical Pentecostals; characterized by prophecy, healings and speaking in tongues. They trace their origins to one of three distinct events in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century (p. 17). The second wave is known as the charismatic renewal. This movement is characterized by those who have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the accompanying speaking in tongues and who have remained in the mainline historic churches. During the 1940s and 1950s, healing evangelists became a key component in bringing the Pentecostal experience to mainline Christians. In 1967, the charismatic movement was embraced by Roman Catholics after Vatican II (p. 20). The third wave came in the 1980s amongst conservative Protestants. This group recognizes the validity of spiritual gifts; however, they do not place the same emphasis on speaking in tongues as the two prior waves (p. 21).

So what is so unique about Canadian Pentecostalism that merits a book to be written to address the subject? Wilkinson shows that the unique history and culture in Canada provides a distinct framework for Pentecostalism, though it shares the common themes and influences of the Pentecostal movements in both Britain and the United States (p. 34).

One such theme that is evident early in Wilkinson's work is the centrality of the book of Acts and the emphasis on speaking in tongues in the interpretation of the Christian life. One example of this is the language of restoration that became very popular in early Pentecostalism. Thomas Robinson explains, "By making *glossolalia* a fundamental element in the restoration and by emphasizing other recent elements such as sanctification and healing as the essence of 'apostolic' Christianity, Pentecostals found that they could write off most of Christian history as less than apostolic . . ." (p. 40). This focus on restoration was reflected in Pentecostal preaching, typically known as the "Latter Rain", which is a line from the book of Joel. What made the book of Joel so appealing to reference was that in the early

church the book of Joel was used to explain the phenomena of *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues (p. 41).

Just as Acts 2 becomes instructive for understanding the gifts of the Spirit, so it becomes instructive for understanding baptism in the Oneness movement. The Oneness movement was another teaching that gained a hearing and was embraced by many within Pentecostal circles. This teaching included the practice of baptism in the name of Jesus alone instead of the classic Trinitarian formula. The reasoning was again based in Acts 2 where only the name of Jesus is given. Debates over the nature of God arose as Oneness Pentecostals sought to reconcile this passage with the classic Trinitarian passage of Matthew 28:19, and the result was that aspects of modalism began to be embraced (p. 44). While Oneness Pentecostals cooperated with Trinitarian Pentecostals in the early stages, it did not last. Beginning in 1940, Oneness Pentecostals became increasingly isolated from other Pentecostals due to the influence of American Pentecostals (p. 49).

Early Canadian Pentecostalism can also be examined by its vision of Canada. This movement offered criticism of the social situation in Canada by way of eschatological imagery. It portrayed the imminent return of Christ as evidenced by the ability to speak in tongues but also envisioned a more equitable world as a foretaste of the world to come (p. 59). While early Pentecostals shared many of the concerns of the social gospel, they did not actively engage in political action. They believed the means for societal reform was through personal transformation and not social action (p. 75). Early Pentecostalism then should not be equated with present-day Pentecostalism as the movement dealt with a range of trends that developed from its emphasis on the book of Acts and speaking in tongues.

The second section of this book considers various aspects of Canadian Pentecostal experience. An essay by Bruce Guenther provides the reader with a window to understanding the challenges that Pentecostals faced in the realm of theological education in early 1920s. As noted in the chapter on Pentecostal spirituality, believers are taught to be compliant with the leading of the Holy Spirit. While this teaching should not necessarily create a dichotomy, the graduates of Western Bible College (established by 1925) found themselves working amongst a group who preferred a simple emphasis on the major Bible “truths” (pp. 100, 103). This is an interesting chapter to read if the reader remembers to keep in mind the writer’s objective of showing the tension between being spirit-led and organizationally driven.

In highlighting four unique ways that Pentecostals appropriate Scripture, Mittelstadt and other contributors do well to provide simple lists to help to keep over-arching concepts of the Pentecostal perspective in mind. The final chapters on Pentecostal experience deal with Native Pentecostalism in British Columbia and female leadership. The chapter on Native Pentecostalism highlights some of the attractive aspects of Pentecostalism that provided a common ground for reaching out to native communities. Pamela Holmes’

essay on female leadership is coloured with a passionate cry for egalitarianism in ministry. This chapter deals with what has restricted the ministry of women historically and what has continued to be an area of tension.

The third and final section of the book deals with the institutionalization and globalization of Pentecostalism beginning with an overview of the charismatic renewal within the Canadian Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. The chapter on the charismatic movement in the Canadian Anglican church is the product of a country-wide research project studying their beliefs and practices. The chapter on the Canadian Roman Catholic Church is an illuminating chapter to understand the different aspects that prepared fertile soil for the renewal (pp. 217-218). The remaining three chapters of the book consider Pentecostalism from a global perspective which includes “the Toronto Blessing” and the challenge of migration of Pentecostals to Canada.

This book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in being introduced to the Pentecostal church and in gaining insight on the impact of Pentecostalism in Canada. It demonstrates the impact that a religious movement has not only on the society but also the impact upon other branches of Christianity. *Canadian Pentecostalism* places particular emphasis on appreciating the impact of Pentecostal theology within the Canadian Anglican Church and Roman Catholic Church. The reader will be forced to see that denominations have an influence upon each other. Secondly, this book is helpful for understanding Canadian church history because there is a tendency to focus either exclusively or predominantly on the classic mainline denominations at the expense of a broader survey of Christian perspectives. The book addresses a rather unique aspect of Canadian church history. While Pentecostals did not show up on the Canadian Census until 1911, estimates today project that Pentecostals and Charismatics may represent as much as 15% of the Canadian population (p. 5). Anyone who wants to truly understand Canadian church history certainly must understand a movement that has impacted a large percentage of the population. Finally, this book provides a window into Pentecostalism that allows the reader to gain an insight into the development that has taken place within the Pentecostal movement. This may in turn encourage the reader’s self-examination of his or her perspective on Christian living, particularly of the doctrinal emphases that give shape to their understanding of the Christian life.

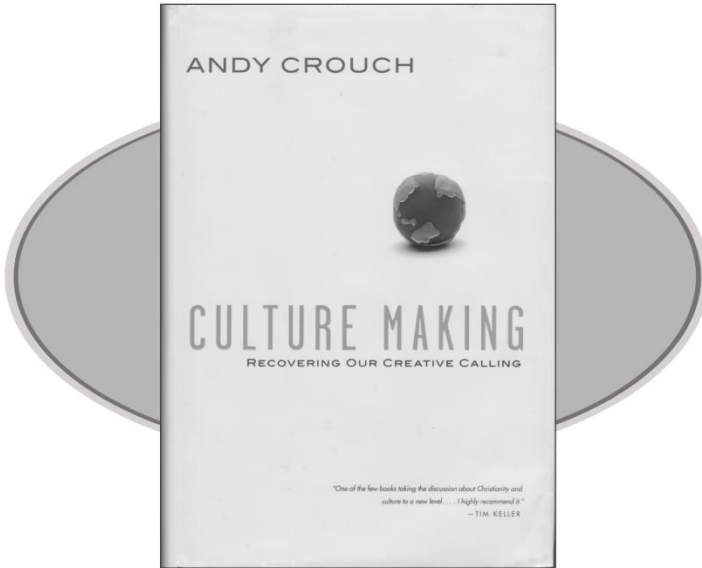
Canadian Pentecostalism attempts to provide a comprehensive overview on a very broad topic. Although it manages to bring the reader along, it is limited as to how much attention it can give to each topic. The layout of the three sections of the book helps the reader to sort all the information that is given. Each of the chapters may not have deserved equal space to be allotted to their particular aspect of study, but each of the chapters shows a different facet of Pentecostalism. The reader may wish more discussion was given to

how Trinitarian Pentecostalism emerged after Oneness Pentecostalism was said to be embraced by almost all Canadian Pentecostals. While less insight is given to any current analysis of the denomination, this book successfully provides an overview that stimulates further readings on Pentecostalism.

Peter K. Aiken is a lay preacher who lives on Prince Edward Island. He is a graduate of the University of Prince Edward Island with a business degree and currently works for an investment firm and studies part-time at Haddington House. His wife is Michelle, and they have a newborn son, Simon Elliot.



***Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling.* Andy Crouch. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008, 284 pp, hc. ISBN 978-0-8308-3394-8**



Most of us find it all too easy, perhaps even unconsciously, to buy into terminology and responses that are trendy in whatever our particular circle is. This may be particularly true today for the Christian considering how to understand and then respond to, interact with and, if possible, impact the world in which we live. So a work which arrests us, causing thorough, thoughtful, searching reexamination is truly a gift. Such a gift is Andy Crouch's recent book, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*.

Crouch divides the subject into three parts. Part one is entitled "Culture". Here he lays the foundation for the book, beginning by examining the meaning of the word – both in the multiple ways it is used in current speech and in the sense in which he will use the terminology. He shows the fallacy of speaking of "the culture" as though it were a single entity, when in actuality it is plural, with diversity, variety and history. He speaks of culture as "...what we make of the world", meaning both "...human effort to take the world as it's given to us and make something else" and making sense of the world as we find it (p. 23). He reminds us that culture is cumulative. What we experience as the culture of today is the cumulative result of creativity to date, creating the limits of what is possible and what is impossible. For example, he illustrates with the U.S. interstate highway system – someone's creative idea which changed the landscape of the U.S., greatly impacting the culture, and made some things possible (a four-day

drive across the country) and some things impossible (a quiet drive in many parts of the country). And particularly, he sees culture creation both as God's mandate to man and as the logical outcome of man being made in the image of the Creator God. "Just as God in Genesis is revealed both as Creator and Ruler (Setter of boundaries) so humanity, made in His image, functions likewise – and the product is 'culture' " (p. 36).

Another aspect of culture explored in part one is the consideration of the affected public. There are different spheres of culture; hence we speak of the culture of a university or of one's workplace, church or even home. He points out that when we consider culture, we tend to think of the biggest end of the scale, which, of course, is that least easily impacted by one small person. However, we can do a great deal about the culture of our homes and may have considerable impact upon the culture of our workplace, our church and even our community. To quote Crouch, "Family is culture at its smallest – and its most powerful" (p. 46).

Crouch then considers how one evaluates cultural change, observing that the elements of culture most easily changed (e.g., fashion) are also those with the least substantial enduring impact. Truly significant change takes a long-term investment and much patience.

He also examines the major attitudes and reactions Christians have historically displayed toward culture – including condemning and critiquing it, withdrawing from it, engaging evangelically with it, copying it with a Christian emphasis, and consuming it – and the danger of a response to one aspect of the culture becoming an unthinking, permanent, broad posture rather than finding a positive and biblical way forward.

So, how does one impact culture? Crouch replies, "The only way to change culture is to create more of it. . . . If culture is to change, it will be because some new tangible . . . thing is presented to a wide enough public that it begins to reshape their world" (p. 67). He concludes part one stating:

If there is a constructive way forward for Christians in the midst of our broken but also beautiful cultures, it will require us to recover these two biblical postures of cultivation and creation. And that recovery will involve revisiting the biblical story itself, where we discover that God is more intimately and eternally concerned with culture than we have yet come to believe (p. 98).

For those who may question the validity of this thesis, Crouch proceeds in part two ("Gospel") to lead the reader through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation from a cultural perspective.

The final section, part three, is "Calling", presenting perhaps unexpected challenges for Christians. Far from proclaiming that the time has come to "change the world", Crouch points out how poorly we achieve change even in our own lives and warns, "Beware of world changers – they have not yet learned the true meaning of sin" (p. 200). Having shown the futility and error

of “world-changing” ideology, he then reminds the reader that “. . . the Maker of the world is still at work ‘changing the world’” and invites the reader to consider how He goes about this and how we might “join his culture making and live out our own calling to make something of the world, without slowly and subtly giving into the temptation to take his place” (p. 201). Crouch also points the reader to think about issues of power in culture making and the reality and necessity of community – we don’t make significant change or offer significant cultural goods operating alone.

Crouch concludes:

So do you want to make culture? Find a community, a small group who can lovingly fuel your dreams and puncture your illusions. Find friends and form a family who are willing to see grace at work in one another’s lives, who can discern together which gifts and which crosses each has been called to bear. Find people who have a holy respect for power and a holy willingness to spend their power alongside the powerless. Find some partners in the wild and wonderful world beyond church doors. And then, together, make something of the world (p. 263).

In *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, Andy Crouch offers a work that is challenging yet accessible and very readable. Whether or not the reader finds himself in agreement with Crouch on every point, I think all will come away with clearer thinking and a different perspective on this important subject as well as, hopefully, greater vision and purpose.

Reviewed by Christina Lehmann, Haddington House



Book Notices

In *Book Notices* we inform readers about works which have been recently added to the Haddington House Library. Most entrants are currently in print, but on occasion we include rare and valuable books we have acquired which students and patrons may want to come and consult. *Book Notices* are made in keeping with our editorial policy; that is, to help our readers in the stewardship of their resources and time. The *Journal* uses the standard abbreviation ‘hc’ to denote hard cover. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) has been included with all books when available.

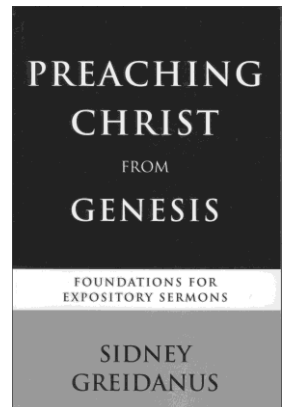
Biblical Theology

***Preaching Christ From Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons.* Sidney Greidanus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007, 536 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-2586-5**

One cannot overestimate the value of a proper understanding of Genesis in constructing an accurate grasp of the rest of God’s Word. The way Genesis is woven throughout the fabric of the Old and New Testaments and is heavily drawn upon in the book of the Revelation shows that one cannot preach the Bible well without a sufficient grounding here.

Following on from his two previous highly acclaimed works on preaching from The Old Testament, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*¹ and *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*,² Sidney Greidanus gives more detailed attention to Genesis itself, underscoring its preeminence as a foundational book.

The author admits narrative preaching comes with many challenges, not least of which is isolating the Christological significance of these narrative passages. However, in approaching these texts, there is much to encourage the modern preacher. Greidanus unpacks each narrative along a variety of lines, with sections including “Text and Context”, “Literary Features”, “Plot



¹ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

² Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Line”, “Theocentric Interpretation” and “Textual Theme and Goal”. Under the helpful section “Ways to Preach Christ”, he has included such subheadings as “Redemptive-Historical Progression”, “Promise-Fulfillment”, “Typology”, “Analogy”, “Longitudinal Themes” and “New Testament References”.

The section which I found particularly helpful was (for lack of a better name) “Longitudinal Themes”. This section takes us beyond the narrative to what Moses was trying to communicate to the church of his day as they put their trial and triumphs in perspective. Greidanus shows how the themes of Genesis are woven throughout the overall history of God’s people. For example, Greidanus says we can trace the theme of “new beginnings from a remnant” in the flood narrative through the lives of Abram and Sarai; the remnant of Israel saved to go into the Promised Land after forty years of wandering; the remnant returning after the Babylonian Exile; the beginnings of the church; and, finally, to the remnant spared from judgment to inherit the kingdom of God at the end of time (p. 110). Such themes can be broadly applied to the church in history but also to the life of the individual Christian.

Greidanus covers twenty-three of the more popular narratives in Genesis and in each provides the preacher with a model for exposition as well as a detailed commentary on the more popular sections. To compliment this excellent work, the author has included handy appendices. Here he briefly walks the preacher through the steps in getting from the text to the sermon, provides an expository sermon outline model and concludes with several of his own sample sermons.

A very valuable resource for the preacher passionate to make Christ known in all of Scripture.

Kent I. Compton is the minister of the Western Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island. Rev. Compton is a graduate of the University of Prince Edward Island and the Free Church College, Edinburgh. He pastored in Edmonton, Alberta, before returning to the Island. He also serves as a Trustee of Haddington House.

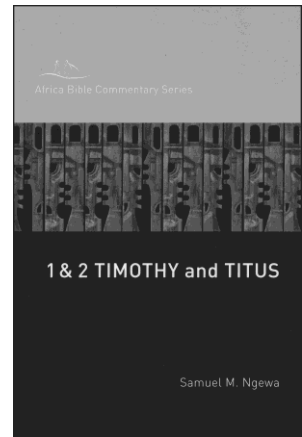


***1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.* Samuel M. Ngewa. Africa Bible Commentary Series. General editors, Dr. Nupanga Weanzana and Dr. Samuel Ngewa. Grand Rapids /Nairobi: Zondervan/Hippo Books, 2009, 466 pp., paper. ISBN 978-9966-805-38-6**

This is the second commentary by Samuel Ngewa which I have spent time reading, the first being his commentary on John. The present volume under review, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, is the first volume for the new Africa Bible Commentary Series, a follow-up, in-depth series to the 2006 single volume *Africa Bible Commentary*. This new series is to be authored either by Anglophone or Francophone African scholars and published under the HippoBooks imprint, “named in honour of the great African theologian Augustine of Hippo” (p. xviii). In many ways it represents the “fourth self” of the three-self formula. Yes, three has now become four! The fourth is to have indigenous Christian communities “self-theologizing”. There is a tension here. Good theology is universal or catholic because it should be for all God’s people regardless of location. Yet at the same time, there is that amazing phenomenon of “speaking in your own language”, which is well beyond the literal sense of an actual language but inclusive of the cultural life, which is much broader. Thus, the commencement of this series is commendable because the transcultural and universal come through, yet the indigenous is heard at the same time.

The author has outlined this commentary into sermonistic units: 1 Timothy has nineteen units, 2 Timothy has fifteen units and Titus has seven units. The units each receive a short thematic title. As I have been going through these the last few weeks, I have not found myself in disagreement with the author’s unit divisions. The author has an excellent ability to organize and summarize well. He shows his scholarly abilities but is also a preacher applying the Word. Unfortunately, not all commentaries do this. Every unit ends with “Questions for Discussion”, many of which I found to be illuminating for preaching.

The author, currently professor of New Testament Studies at the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology and formerly a professor at Scott Theological College, both in Kenya, very capably interacts with today’s authors who are writing on the pastoral epistles. He holds a Ph.D. in Biblical Interpretation from Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.



Generally, I was convinced by his exegesis. However, as one would expect, there will not be universal agreement on all conclusions of the author; for example, on 1 Timothy 2:9-15, where I did not find myself convinced by the exegesis offered. Here I would add that the series may not be as African as the publishers and editors envisage. The Christian world often universally struggles with the same matters. Thus, we are back to that tension – the transcultural and the indigenous.

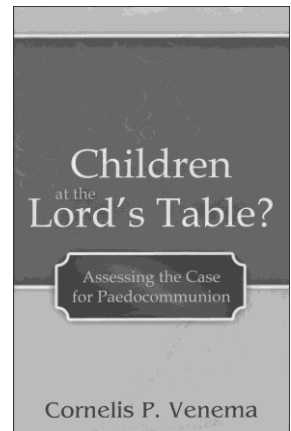
Readers will find much food for thought here. I was reminded in part of the Bible Speaks Today series and John Stott's volumes on the pastoral epistles. This new series, Africa Bible Commentary Series, has the potential to make a contribution to contemporary commentaries of Scripture. As I read the volume, I was again struck how important it is for a preacher to select his illustrations appropriately for the audience he is addressing. *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* is contextually illustrated just as many commentaries of the West are contextually illustrated – food for thought.

Jack C. Whytock

Systematic Theology

***Children at the Lord's Table?: Assessing the Case for Paedocommunion.* Cornelis Venema. Grand Rapids: Christian Heritage Books, 2009, 198 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-60178-059-1**

This is a convincing answer to the advocates of paedocommunion. Venema is both learned and lucid. He takes a firm position in opposition to children being admitted to the Lord's Table on the basis of their baptism, but he does not fail to present the arguments of the other side adequately. The jacket contains commendations from several well known leaders, including one by George W. Knight III which reads: ". . . one of the best treatments of this question, shows that Scripture clearly articulates that those invited to the table are called to come by believing in Christ, and not merely because they have been baptized as infants. I highly recommend this book."



In the introductory chapter, the author distinguishes between allowing children at a young age to make a simple but credible profession of faith and so be admitted to the Lord's Table and the practice of bringing them to the Table on the basis of their baptism or covenant membership. It is this latter view that is the crux of the debate, and it seems that in recent years a number of writers professing the Reformed faith have been attracted to it.

The arguments of the proponents of paedocommunion are challenged on several levels. Evidence is provided from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In addition, it is shown that the position of the author is supported by both Reformed history and the Reformed confessions. Arguments in favor of paedocommunion from early church history are doubtful to say the least, and the practice in later centuries was affected by growing sacramentalism.

A full chapter is devoted to the passage which, in his words, contains "the most important and compelling piece of New Testament evidence that bears

on the question of paedocommunion . . .” (p. 101). This is 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Venema is good at giving summaries, and the discussion is concluded with a full chapter entitled, “Concluding Observations and Evaluation”. He says that the biblical argument advanced by those advocating paedocommunion is partly based on the view that the Passover Feast and other Old Testament observances included children of the earliest age and that the Lord’s Supper is the New Testament counterpart of the Passover. He provides a full discussion of these points and, among other things, reminds his readers that the ultimate norm for the church must be the New Testament description of the administration of the new covenant. In his comments on the Corinthian passage, he shows that the historic Reformed teaching is correct in its insistence that those admitted to the Lord’s Table must be professing believers. This is evident because participants are called upon to remember, to believe, to discern.

There is a tendency among some advocates of paedocommunion to regard all members of the Covenant community as being in full and saving communion with the Lord. The Old Testament scriptures provide little support for such a view, and it is clearly not in harmony with much of the parabolic teaching of Jesus. Furthermore, as Venema points out, it raises other theological questions including the efficacy of the sacraments and the perseverance of the saints.

The book is not long (198 pages including the bibliography and indices), and the discussion is easy to follow. The various aspects of the subject are analyzed clearly and the views of the opponents are fairly stated and honestly met. I would give it the highest commendations. For anyone who is concerned about the question of paedocommunion, this work should certainly be studied. And it is suitable for both the professional and non-professional reader.

There is a fine appendix in which the author expounds the historic Reformed teaching on the subject of baptism. This had been written independently of the main thesis of the book.

William R. Underhay

***Spectacular Sins.* John Piper. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008, 121 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4335-0474-7**

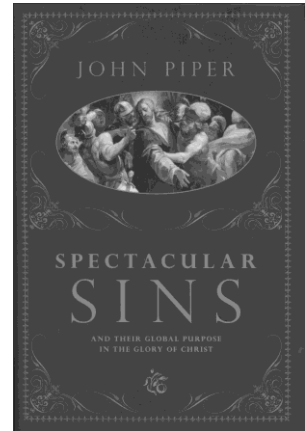
The relationship between evil and the sovereignty of God has been passionately debated for years. The events of 9/11 brought that debate into a sharper focus for this generation. At its heart, a question arises about the ability, and by extension, the ultimate glory of God. One proposed remedy has been the teaching of Open Theism, which simply excuses God of any foreknowledge of such evil.

In this work, John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, sets out to tackle some of the more “spectacular sins” recorded in the Bible and to show through them how God’s glory is not only not tarnished but is accentuated.

Piper speaks with a prophetic voice in laying out his reasons for the book. After surveying the deteriorating attitudes towards Christianity, he warns, “The coddled Western world will sooner or later give way to great affliction. And when it does, whose vision of God will hold? Where is the Christian mind and soul being prepared for the horrors to come?” (p. 13) Toward the end of the book, he concludes that this can only happen as we are grounded in “. . . these great historical vistas of God’s sovereignty over sin . . .” (p. 97).

Having considered the biblical teaching of God’s relationship to and control over human evil, he looks more specifically at five of the more “spectacular” manifestations of human evil and how God used them to display His glory: the disobedience of Adam, the pride at the Tower of Babel, the sale of Joseph, the demand of Israel for a king and the betrayal of the Lord Jesus by Judas Iscariot. The foreknowledge, wisdom and determined counsel of God are clearly shown and vindicated in each of these.

The marvel about this relatively small book is its value at so many levels; first, simply for the peace it affords the Christian. We see that not only the more “spectacular” sins are under God’s sovereign care but also the fiery trials that afflict us from day to day. Secondly, this book is a tool for apologetics. It confronts the question of evil head on and displays the wisdom of God in the amazing ways He wields evil for His glory and the salvation of His people. Rather than evil being the “Achilles heel” of Christianity, it is a theatre for the glory of God. Thirdly, we can appreciate world missions in a different way. The evil permitted, indeed ordained, at Babel left the Redeemer with not one monolithic culture to rescue, but His glory is displayed in that “. . . it magnifies the authority and power of Christ to make disciples in every language. His power is all the more glorious



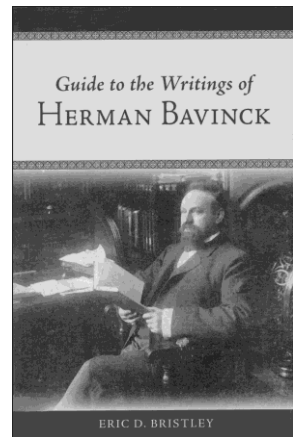
because it breaks into so many different languages and peoples and brings salvation.” Piper adds that if Babel had not happened, “. . . the global glory of the gospel of Christ would not shine as beautifully as it does in the prism of thousands of languages” (p.71-72). One cannot look at the nations in quite the same way.

Rarely have I invested such a small amount of time in a book that yielded such blessing. One is left to conclude “. . . how unsearchable His judgments and ways past finding out” (Rom 11:33). One hopes that this is a subject Piper will revisit with an expanded treatment.

Kent I. Compton

***Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck.* Eric D. Bristley. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008, 157 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-60178-054-6**

Until recently, English readers have had limited access to the works of the great Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck. This is surprising given both the esteem in which he was held by many of his contemporaries in North America and the high praise he continues to earn from present-day Reformed theologians. Thanks to the Dutch Reformed Translation Society formed in 1994, the situation is changing. English readers now have access to an increased selection of his works, especially the four volume *Reformed Dogmatics*.³ Because this should stimulate greater interest in Bavinck, Eric Bristley’s *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck* is a timely resource.



The guide unfolds in six parts. The first section is a brief sketch of Bavinck’s life and work. Bavinck lived from 1854-1921. He was raised in the very conservative environment of the *Afscheiding* (Secession) but took the bulk of his theological training in the heart of Dutch liberalism at the University of Leiden. Following a brief pastorate, he served as professor of theology at Kampen (1883-1901) and the Free University (1902-1921). In this sketch, Bristley is concerned that we appreciate Bavinck’s writings in their historical context.

Section two is a reprint of John Bolt’s essay, “Herman Bavinck Speaks English”, taken from the *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 19 (2008). Bolt

³ Readers may find a review of Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 4: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, gen. ed. John Bolt, trans. Jon Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), in the *Haddington House Journal* 11 (2009): 94-97.

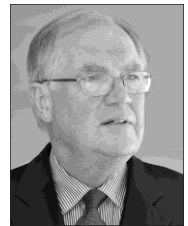
provides an informative, insightful history and analysis of translating Bavinck into English and an outline of some of the significant Bavinck scholarship in English. Bavinck was a prolific writer with a wide range of interests; he published on education, history, philosophy, psychology and culture as well as theology. It is interesting to note that when Bavinck was introduced to North America, “Reformed people were more interested in Bavinck the social thinker and pedagogue than Bavinck the theologian” (p. 30). However, by mid-century “the first scholarly treatments of Bavinck’s theology at the doctoral level were by North Americans, not by his fellow countrymen” (p. 36).

Sections three, four and five consist of a bibliography of Bavinck’s works covering the period 1880 to 2008; archival material located at the Free University of Amsterdam; and a bibliography of the secondary literature on Bavinck. The *Guide* concludes with an index of titles in English, Dutch and Korean.

Bristley’s bibliographical material is interesting, informative and stimulating. He has not only listed Bavinck’s works but has provided excerpts, prefaces, annotations and reviews which allow one to gain both a sense of their content and significance as well as a feel for Bavinck’s thought and approach.

The *Guide* is an invaluable resource for those doing scholarly research on Bavinck. Pastors and theological students probably do not need such a detailed listing of Bavinck’s writings but will profit from reading this book. They will be moved to read his works, especially his *Reformed Dogmatics*, which Richard Gaffin says is “arguably the most important systematic theology ever produced in the Reformed tradition”.⁴

Rev. Howard McPhee is the pastor of the Springdale Christian Reformed Church, Bradford, Ontario, where he has served for the past sixteen years. This is his first book notice for the Journal, and we look forward to his contributions in the future.

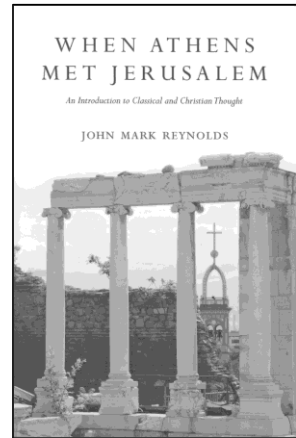


⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, gen. ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), back jacket of book.

Historical Theology

***When Athens Met Jerusalem: An Introduction to Classical and Christian Thought.* John Mark Reynolds. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009, 266 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-2923-1**

In his newest book, *When Athens Met Jerusalem*, John Mark Reynolds, Founder and Director of Torrey Honors Institute and Professor of Philosophy at Biola University in California, sets out to provide an overview and framework of classical philosophy and thought for the purpose of showing the strong relationship and debt that Christianity owes to the ancients. The question of just how much a debt Christianity owes to the first philosophers is one Reynolds is not willing to answer immediately. However, a statement made in the introduction helps to sum up the general thesis and relationship that Reynolds believes exists between Athens and Jerusalem.



Jerusalem gave the basic, rational, religious truth on which to build an understanding of the world. It was the starting place for wisdom. Athens gave the technical language and categories to help define and extend the truth. Jerusalem gave the world truth; Athens gave it a valid way to express that truth. Out of this creative harmony came the classical Christian civilizations that shaped most of the world in which we live (p. 18).

Reynolds begins his overview by examining Greek culture before it had philosophy, when Homer and Hesiod's myths were all that was needed to answer questions and interpret the world. This quest for unifying principles to explain the phenomena of the world led to the birth of the first philosopher, Thales, along with other notable early philosophers such as Anaximander, Xenophanes and Parmenides. Reynolds' treatment of the Pre-Socratics is brief; yet even with such a brief treatment, the shared philosophical language between the Pre-Socratics and Christians is brought

out. The best example is Heraclitus and his use of the word *logos*, which will be used to great effect at the beginning of John's Gospel.

After an introduction to Pre-Socratic thought, Reynolds moves onto Socrates and Plato, the subject that will occupy most of the rest of the book. Both philosophers are placed within an historical context so that the reader who has not encountered either of these thinkers before might have a better understanding of what the men are reacting to and how much weight they carry in the history of philosophy. In outlining Plato's definitions of the soul and the concept of "The Good", the reader once again has the opportunity to see how the philosophical language further developed by Plato and Aristotle had a great influence on the Early Church. However, this is the key point: while these men were capable of knowing aspects of truths, they were ultimately not capable of knowing The Truth, the source of all truth and knowledge that is God.

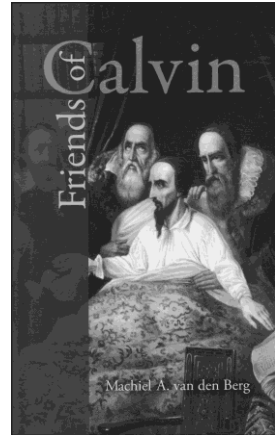
Reynolds advocates for a return to studying the classics so that as Christians we may better understand our starting point in Jerusalem. His book provides a good initiation as it presents a very basic introduction to classical thought; but in covering such a wide segment of the history of philosophy, and in such a quick manner, readers will be left with many questions. However, I believe this is the intended goal of the book; and when curious readers are still not satisfied upon completion, they have at least been given the tools and directions to the primary sources.

Reviewed by Ian A. Whytock, a senior classics student at the University of King's College, Halifax. Ian has a keen interest in history and philosophy. In 2009 he served as the assistant curator at the Confederation Art Gallery, Charlottetown, and was a research assistant for the forthcoming book Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome.



***Friends of Calvin.* Machiel A. van den Berg. Translated by Reinder Bruinsma. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 266 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-6227-3**

Friends of Calvin allows us to explore Calvin from a different angle than the normal biographical works or thematic theological studies. In this book we see Calvin in the context of whom he knew and with whom he was “friendly”. This work began as a series of separate articles published in the *Gereformeerd Weekblad*. In 2006 these were brought together under the Dutch title *Vrienden van Calvijn* and have now been translated by Reinder Bruinsma into English and published in 2009 under the title *Friends of Calvin*. There is no mention as to what the translator labours at beyond translating and only a very brief biographical statement on the author: “Machiel A. van den Berg is a Reformed preacher



living in the Netherlands. He regularly publishes articles about the history of the Reformation and about Calvin in particular” (back cover). The book contains twenty-four written portraits, averaging about nine pages each (the exception being the portrait of Philip Melancthon, which is about fourteen pages). Several contain likenesses which are mainly drawn from Theodore Beza’s *Icones*. Van den Berg has included the normal literary apparatus of such works: an introduction, bibliography and index of people and places.

The portraits are of many whose names we are familiar with as “friends” of Calvin: Nicolas Cop, William Farel, Pierre Viret, Martin Bucer, John Knox and Theodore Beza. Yet, there are also several names which are far less familiar: Claude d’Hangest, Renée de France, Benoit Textor and Lord and Lady De Falais. This is where I began to query. What criteria did the author use when constituting a list of “friends”? Friendship and correspondence is raised in the introduction, thus I began to conclude that this may have been one criterion – an extensive friendship through correspondence – in addition to those Calvin actually met, or is it a combination of factors? Some clarification was needed in the introduction on this point as other names come to mind as possible inclusions for a written portrait. The author does include friends of Calvin who, with the passage of time, were removed from that category, such as Lord and Lady De Falais (pp. 185-195), “A Dutch Couple” who were excised by Calvin as no longer his friends even to the point of removing the name De Falais from the original dedication to his commentary on First Corinthians (p. 194). This certainly does expand one’s understanding of the complexity of relationships Calvin had.

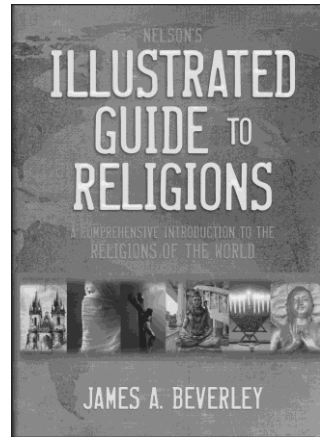
This is an interesting book and does make a certain contribution to ongoing Calvin studies. I cannot see it as being used as a class textbook; but as either a reference work or for those who enjoy reading biographical studies, it is worth while.

Jack C. Whytock

Applied Theology

***Nelson's Illustrated Guide to Religions: A Comprehensive Introduction to the Religions of the World.* James A. Beverley. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009, 850 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-7852-4491-2**

One of the immediately striking features of James Beverley's new book, *Nelson's Illustrated Guide to Religions*, is the fact that it is quite lavishly illustrated. This, coupled with Beverley's good writing style, certainly makes the book a reader-friendly work. This may also account for the weight of the book since obviously high quality paper has been used. Beverley tells us in the preface that "in a general sense this work is a product of over thirty years of study and teaching in the worlds of religion and philosophy" (p. ix). He is certainly an authority from the evangelical Christian community on this subject and is well recognized around the world for such.



This book is substantial – 850 pages – and is divided into nineteen chapters of religious divisions ordered alphabetically from Baha'i to Witchcraft. Yet some of the nineteen divisions contain several subdivisions; for example, the chapter on Mormonism, where Beverley lists several of the distinct Mormon churches (p. 361). Beverley clearly has an enormous breadth of knowledge on his subject as about two hundred religions are covered. The book also contains four very informative appendices, which will be helpful for readers. The chapters on Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are very much an overview and must be read as such.

One slight quibble is a word in the book's subtitle, namely the word "comprehensive". I realize it is used as an adjective to the word "introduction", which does qualify things somewhat. However, since I often work in Africa, I was looking for a chapter devoted to African Traditional Religion, yet it is not there. There is discussion at points on this, but one has to go searching. This is an area which needs fuller coverage; thus I question

the subtitle's accuracy. However, I am left wondering if the subtitle was added by the publisher as it only appears on the jacket cover but not on the title page. So perhaps this was not the author's doing.

Instructors in Bible colleges and evangelical theological institutions will need to ensure that this book gets into their institutional libraries. It is destined to become a standard reference work. Some may use it as a textbook for world religion courses, but for many institutions it will be a standard reference work from which assigned chapters could easily be given to students in preparation for a class seminar. The chapter on the Unification Church (pp. 675-696) could easily be the basis for a student seminar.

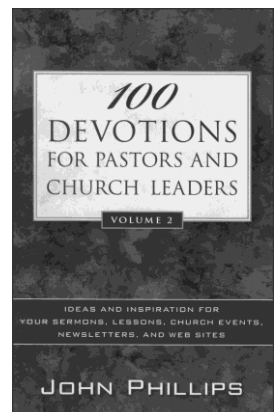
Again, well written, well illustrated, excellent layout with clear sub-headings and boxed themes and good endnotes to each chapter. It was surprising to see there was no separate "Select Bibliography" at the back, and a 109 page index in a single column could easily have been made into double columns and reduced to approximately fifty pages. The book is written from an evangelical standard, and the author interacts intelligently and with an endeavour to honestly represent various religions yet without compromise as a Christian. Perhaps James Beverley's next work will be a handbook of religions with himself as the organizing editor as there are few others who could lead such a project as the content of this book attests.

Jack C. Whytock

***100 Devotions for Pastors and Church Leaders*, vol. 2. John Phillips. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008, 216 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8254-3388-7**

I must admit that I had no exposure to the work of John Phillips before this little devotional; however, he is widely known for his many expository commentaries on the Bible and his work at Moody Evening School.⁵ The purpose of these devotionals is to act as a jumping-off point for pastors and Bible teachers in developing sermons, lessons, church events, newsletters and websites. There is no doubting Phillips' commitment to a Christ-centered presentation in all of his devotionals.

As the title indicates, the book consists of one



⁵ For example, John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Luke: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005). There are nineteen volumes in the New Testament portion of this series.

hundred short devotionals, each one and one half to two pages in length. In the course of the book, Phillips includes readings from Genesis chapter one to the book of Revelation. The first forty are from the Old Testament and the remainder from the New Testament – fourteen from the Gospels, thirty-one from Acts and the epistles, fourteen from the first five chapters of Revelation, and a final thematic one.

The reader does need to be alerted to a couple of items in approaching these. Firstly, Phillips engages in fanciful conjecture in some of his selections. For example, when considering the crows that fed the prophet Elijah, Phillips writes, “Elijah must have considered their color, black and glossy. Elijah would doubtless think of the Shulamite, in Solomon’s spirit-born son, and her description of her beloved: ‘His locks’ she said, ‘are bushy, as black as a raven.’ That reminder would take Elijah’s soul by storm, for the Shulamite’s words reached far beyond her own beloved. . . . So, the color of the ravens alone reminded the lonely prophet of Christ” (p. 51). Such conclusions are not helpful in constructing a responsible approach to Christ in the Old Testament. While there is some place for imagination when considering what “possibly” might have been the case in a given situation, it is still the responsibility of the Bible expositor to be able to prove what he says from the text itself. To do otherwise is to draw away from the Word to the author’s flights of imagination as the foundation for devotion.

Secondly, Phillips is a strongly premillennial dispensationalist. This comes out in several of the selections. Ezekiel’s temple, according to Phillips, is “the temple yet to grace the earth when Jesus will reign ‘from the river unto the ends of the earth’ ” (p. 77).

In some places, these weaknesses leave the reader unable to read devotionally. One is left uneasy by the way so much is read into some passages.

Despite these two caveats, the discerning reader will be able to sift much devotional material from these selections. The tone of the devotional is rich with the spirit of the gospel so that the reader cannot help but be suitably stirred to a better understanding of the accomplishments of Christ on his behalf. It will fulfill its remit as a source of “ideas and inspiration” for pastors and church leaders, even if they will not always be convinced with his conclusions.

Kent I. Compton