Reviews

Calvin. By Bruce Gordon. London: Yale University Press, 2009. ISBN 976-6-30-12076-9. xvi + 398 pp. £25.00.

Among the deluge of Calviniana that appeared for his 500th anniversary year there are a number of biographical studies, of which this one by Bruce Gordon (late of St Andrews and now of Yale) is the most thorough and scholarly. Gordon portrays Calvin in short thematic scenes. This style makes the book easy to pick up and put down, and it gives Gordon freedom to roam from topic to topic as he unfolds Calvin's life.

The present day biographer of Calvin is faced with a dilemma. There is a good deal of drama to Calvin's life. His life even as a theologian, controversialist, and Bible commentator was lived at such a breakneck speed that by his early fifties he was worn out. (When he wrote about divine providence, he advised the Christian to live prudently, to take note of the divinely-appointed connectedness of means and ends. But he resolutely failed to heed that advice himself, at least as regards his own health.) But what explains the drama—his flight from France, and then from Geneva, the frequent political turmoil in that city, the quarrels, the swings of temper, his deliberate offensiveness to his opponents?

What made Calvin tick were ideas, ideas about divine grace and sin, about who has the right to excommunicate a person from church, or about what exactly goes on in the Lord's Supper. And for Calvin, ideas had consequences, deeply personal consequences. Thus the biographer's dilemma: to explain the connection between Calvin's ideas and his life.

Gordon does well in producing a narrative of Calvin's life that is intelligible in terms of the impact of his ideas upon his own unique personality. That is, he nearly always provides the reader with sufficient theological and religious background to make what Calvin did and suffered understandable. He sets Calvin's activities in the context of his own conversion, even though the circumstances of that momentous change still remain shadowy, and this fact certainly does not help the biographer. To present such a man in such a way is a considerable and praiseworthy achievement. This is not a theological biography, but it is pretty clearly the biography of a theologian. So Gordon does not simply chronicle events, he tells us the significance of Calvin's commentary on Romans, and goes into Calvin's relations with the various Swiss city churches with great thoroughness. He analyzes the reasons for the unevenness of Calvin's international impact, and into the printing and publishing of those works of Calvin's which were rapidly translated and exported, and on which his reputation came to rest.

A couple of things puzzled me. One is Gordon's claim, which he makes twice, that Calvin's early book, *Psychopannychia*, written in 1534 but finally published in an altered form in 1542, was aimed at Michael Servetus (pp. 43; 216). *Psychopannychia* contests the Anabaptist doctrines of soul sleep and 'mortalism'. The reason for Calvin giving these doctrines priority is somewhat mysterious, but it is hard to believe he already had Servetus in his sights. Servetus did make an appointment to meet up with Calvin in Paris in 1534, an appointment which Calvin kept but Servetus did not, to Calvin's annoyance. The author provides no evidence for his claim that it was 'partly directed to Servetus and his circle in Paris', or even for the view that Servetus had such a circle. Bernard Cottret, whose biography of Calvin has been the standard, does not offer a hint of such a connection.

One place where the author is weak is Calvin's controversies with the Lutheran theologian Westphal over the Supper. Gordon recounts every movement of the debate in considerable detail. But he never tells us what the theological issues were between Calvin and Westphal. This omission makes it hard for readers to judge his opinion that Calvin's debate with Westphal was a personal defeat for him.

Nevertheless, this is an excellent general biography of the Reformer, sympathetic, engaging, and informative.

Paul Helm, Regent College, Vancouver, BC Canada

John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life. By Herman J. Selderhuis. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. ISBN 978-0-8308-2921-7. 304 pp. £9.99.

I approached Herman Selderhuis's biography of John Calvin with some scepticism, wondering whether the quincentenary of Calvin's birth really warranted one more account of a life that has been so repeatedly documented, and whether there was really anything new to say. My doubts, however, were thoroughly assuaged upon reading it. The genius of this book lies not, admittedly, in its revelation of novel biographical facts about Calvin—though all the relevant details are there—but in the *humanity* it manages to impart to a subject who, despite frequent scrutiny, has somehow remained so ethereal for several centuries.

Selderhuis achieves his stated goal of discovering 'what [Calvin] was like as a person' (p. 8) through careful and extensive attention to Calvin's correspondence. The character consequently emerging is far removed from the 'emotionless stoic' (p. 187) one might anticipate meeting on the basis of 'surviving portraits'—not to mention deliberate caricatures—that seem to depict 'a rather unsociable person who can barely find anything to enjoy in life' (p. 28). This Calvin is rather a man of frequent tears and

(even) occasional laughter. So in a letter to the Lord of Richebourg, Calvin speaks of crying for several days—'so shocked and so despondent' was he—upon hearing of the death of Richebourg's son as well as the boy's teacher, Calvin's close friend Claude Féray (p. 253). And in a letter to his friends the de Fallais family on the occasion of their child's birth, Calvin expresses his desire to spend time with the couple and to laugh with them, and so to teach their new child the art of laughter, nevertheless noting that 'we can only really laugh once we have left this life' (p. 212).

While emphasizing these more intimate aspects of Calvin's person within the framework of a broadly chronological narrative, Selderhuis still manages to highlight the main features of Calvin's thought. But the Reformer's core theological convictions are largely developed, again, from his correspondence, a tactic which renders those doctrines for which Calvin is most famous (or perhaps infamous) somewhat more personal. So the doctrine of God's providence, for example, becomes a tool in Calvin's hand for comforting the bereaved father noted above: 'God [...] has reclaimed your son' (p. 254). It is a tool Calvin wields with sensitivity to the pain of loss; recollection of God's sovereignty is not meant to prevent the full range of human emotions provoked by hardship: 'I am not asking you to suffer no more pain. For this is not the view of life that we are taught in the school of Christ, that we lay aside the God-given human emotions and that we turn from people into stones' (p. 254).

My single complaint about this book relates to the system of notes (or lack thereof). A brief section at the close of the work provides bibliographical data for *some* of Calvin's words and ideas encountered in the main body. Unfortunately this leaves many ideas attributed to Calvin entirely unreferenced; moreover, the reader lacks any indication of useful secondary literature should he/she want to pursue a specific topic related to Calvin. Selderhuis acknowledges the scarcity of 'references to secondary literature', suggesting that this characteristic of the work 'will get us closer to Calvin himself' (p. 8). In my opinion, thorough citation would have detracted nothing from the book or presented any real obstacle to its focus on 'Calvin himself'; it would merely have made the book more useful.

Nevertheless, the work deserves hearty commendation. Friends and foes of Calvin alike will benefit from it; both will discover something more human in and about Calvin, a reality which should produce greater empathy for the Reformer, no matter one's level of agreement with his theology and/or relation to those ecclesiastical traditions which trace their lineage to him.

Aaron Denlinger, University of Aberdeen

Calvin: A Brief Guide to His Life and Thought. By Willem van 't Spijker. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press (UK: Alban Books), 2009. ISBN 0-664-23225-6. x + 197 pp. £16.99.

At first glance, van 't Spijker's *Calvin* seems a great choice for those interested in gaining access to Calvin's biography, theology, and contemporary influence in one volume (and a slim one at that). Upon further investigation, this work confirms this first impression to some extent—with two important caveats that merit some attention.

For a general audience and ministerial students, *Calvin* covers much historical and theological ground while being both brief and solid. Van 't Spijker's discussion is necessarily selective, but what he does treat, he handles masterfully. For scholars, the many Dutch, German, and French works van 't Spijker appeals to will be a welcome entry into the literature of Continental Calvin studies. The index is unusually thorough and helpful.

Now the caveats: first, this work feels a bit like the translation from an unpublished manuscript that it is. Though spanning from the history of sixteenth-century France (ch. 1) to Calvin's international influence (ch. 10), there is no overall introduction or conclusion to the work, nor is there any transitional material between the historical and theological sections of the book. Despite this, the work flows reasonably well, aided by van 't Spijker's clear and confident prose.

Second, and more importantly, the body of the text was completed a decade ago, though the bibliographies would suggest otherwise. A German translation of van 't Spijker's Dutch manuscript was published in 2001. The most recent date in the footnotes is 1999 (though only 3 works from that year are noted). The chapter bibliographies, however, are peppered with later works. Some of the post-manuscript works cited are simply reprints or re-editions. Two are translations. Three works are wholly new (that is, were first published after the present work was written).

Likewise, several works in the Select General Bibliography are more recent than 1999, even more recent than the most recent works in the chapter bibliographies. Again, while many are merely reprints or 2nd eds., some, like Cottret's biography (2000) or Partee's *Theology of Calvin* (2008), are unknown to van 't Spijker's text or indeed the chapter bibliographies. While the much revised and expanded 2nd ed. of de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin* (2008), which Bierma also translated, isn't noted at the end of ch. 8, it is in the General Bibliography. Both works from 2008 along with one by Randall Zachman, it should be noted, are published by Westminster John Knox.

What is the relationship between the bibliographies and the body of the chapters? Bibliographical 'padding' is not always confined to adding later works; there is a huge discrepancy, for instance, between the relatively few references *within* ch. 10 and the relatively large bibliography for this chapter. Readers should be aware that the scholarship in this work published in 2009—fine though it is in many ways—is more than a decade old. A lot has transpired in Calvin/ism studies since 1999, as the bibliographical padding in this volume evinces.

Brannon Ellis, University of Aberdeen

John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought. By Randall C. Zachman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8010-3129-8. 277 pp. £16.99

This book consists of a collection of essays by one of the foremost John Calvin scholars writing today. Zachman is Professor of Reformation Studies at the University of Notre Dame, and in this volume he brings his knowledge and insight to bear on a range of topics in Calvin studies. The result is a text which is a worthy addition to the shelves of Calvin scholars and enthusiasts.

Zachman has two principal aims to achieve in this collection, and his work is correspondingly divided into two parts. The first aim is to explore Calvin's work as a teacher and as a pastor: his striving to ensure that every member of the church was able to read and understand Scripture, and his production of godly resources—the *Institutes*, commentaries, catechisms, and sermons—to that end. The chapters in this section of the book thus explore aspects of the content and purpose of Calvin's writings, treating among other themes his understanding of the teaching office, his underlying conception of the *Institutes*, his exegetical method, his early children's catechisms, and his Ephesians sermons. The second aim of the book is to consider Calvin's concept of the 'living images of God' – namely creation and Jesus Christ – in which the invisible God becomes visible to us. These chapters focus on the way in which Calvin construes 'image' and 'Word' in his theology, as well as on the relationship between them, and how they combine to draw the faithful Christian towards God and towards renewal of her thoughts and deeds.

Throughout the volume, Zachman displays a compelling and deeply impressive knowledge of the range of Calvin's writings across different genres. There are extensive quotations from Calvin on every page, allowing Zachman in each chapter to construct his argument carefully on the basis of solid evidence from the Reformer's pen rather than by way of selective citation or sweeping assertion. En route, Zachman demolishes

many of the crude received stereotypes of Calvin. He posits the centrality of imagery in Calvin's theological understanding – albeit in a way distinct from Lutheranism and Catholicism – and also emphasizes the affective dimension of Christian piety and its power for contemplation and transformation. The carefully constructed picture of Calvin's view which results gives a real insight into the definitive pedagogical and pastoral thrust of Calvin's enterprise as a theologian.

Though the book focuses unwaveringly on Calvin, on occasion Zachman refers to the work of other magisterial Reformers, such as Zwingli and Luther, and even to the work of later theologians such as Schleiermacher and Barth. The exception to this narrow focus is an insightful chapter on the relationship between Calvin and Melanchthon. In a similar vein, Zachman is economic with his references to other Calvin commentators, although at certain key points he nevertheless takes care to situate his own work relative to contemporary Calvin studies. The result of this limited dialogical engagement is that while the book boasts an excellent index, there is no bibliography as such, but only a list of primary texts (Calvin, Luther, Melanchthon) consulted. While some may construe this as a weakness, such a methodology at the very least facilitates Zachman's desire to allow Calvin to speak for himself and thus to be represented fairly and accurately.

As a collection of previously published papers, the book inevitably suffers from a certain degree of repetition, while the way in which the theological evidence is diligently assembled and presented is more suggestive of a scholarly than a popular text. Nevertheless, the volume confirms Zachman's reputation as being one of the best Calvin interpreters in current scholarship, and will offer an informative read to anyone with some previous interest in or exposure to Calvin's work. Above all, it offers an illuminating overview of Calvin as pastor and teacher as well as theologian, and of his belief in the centrality and the significance of Christian education at all levels for a healthy Christian church.

Paul T. Nimmo, University of Edinburgh

A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis. Edited by David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008. ISBN 978-1-59638-091-2. xvii + 506 pp. $35.99.

Preparation for the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth saw the publication of this collection of commentaries on Calvin's *magnum opus*. It is comprised of nineteen chapters written by various scholars from reformed theological seminaries in the United States. Most are written by systematic theologians, though there are contributions from professors

of apologetics, church history and historical theology. They are best read alongside Calvin's *Institutes*, for each chapter offers insight to a particular topic and section. A bibliography gives the novice a digestible introduction to primary and secondary works. There are several reasons why this work will prove useful for those desiring an understanding of Calvin's thought.

First, it raises many of the doctrines that Calvin viewed as most significant. There are discussions on his theology of the Trinity (Douglas Kelly), creation (Joseph Pipa Jr.), sin (Michael Horton), justification (Richard Gaffin), and sanctification/regeneration (William Edgar).

Second, each chapter places Calvin's *Institutes* (and his theology as a whole) in its historical context. An effort is made to position Calvin's thought within the history of ideas. This shows that many of Calvin's most significant ideas are not original to him, but rather developed by him.

Third, it traces the historical development of Calvin's theology. There are references throughout to various scholarly debates ranging from age-old arguments on the extent of the atonement to the most recent arguments concerning non-forensic imputation.

It should be emphasized that this work is a *guide* to Calvin's thought. It does not seek to correct deficiencies that there might be in his theology. And although substantial, not every subject is addressed at length. Derek Thomas points out that the doctrine of adoption is of primary significance for Calvin, but no extended treatment of it is offered in the volume.

A Theological Guide is a scholarly, yet accessible resource for one of the most significant theological works in church history.

John C. A. Ferguson, University of Aberdeen

The Writings of John Calvin, Expanded Edition: An Introductory Guide. By Wulfert de Greef; translated by Lyle D. Bierma. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press (UK: Alban Books), 2008. ISBN 978-0-664-23230-6. xxvii + 253 pp. £26.99.

This is an update of an earlier edition published by Apollos in 1993. It is a useful, though brief introduction to Calvin's various writings and the circumstances of their production. It provides fascinating details that illuminate Calvin's churchmanship, from the highly intellectual theological disputes of his day to the practical matters of every day church life.

'Expanded' is a slightly misleading subtitle. The only substantial difference between this new edition and the 1993 Apollos edition is that the footnotes and 'Bibliography of Secondary Literature' have been updated/revised to include recent Calvin scholarship. The main body of the text is unchanged. 'Updated' would have been more accurate.

Those particularly interested in primary sources may find the 1993 Apollos edition more useful which has the 'Chronological Index of Calvin's Writings' indexed to de Greef's text for ease of reference. This useful feature is unfortunately omitted from this edition, which otherwise remains a great scholarly tool.

John C. A. Ferguson, University of Aberdeen

Engaging with Calvin: Aspects of the Reformer's Legacy for Today. Edited by Mark D. Thompson. Nottingham: IVP, 2009. ISBN 978-1-84474-398-8. 319 pp. £19.99.

'All we know about John Calvin was that he was an eighteenth-century Scotsman, a prude and obscurantist with a buckle on his hat, possibly a burner of witches, certainly the very spirit of capitalism' (Marilynne Robinson, *The Death of Adam*, p. 345). Robinson's satire is in tune with Mark Thompson's introduction to this collection of essays linked with the 2009 More College School of Theology. Thompson states that 'Calvin has always been a victim of caricature and misunderstanding', and so this book aims to encourage readers 'to move beyond the caricatures and read Calvin for themselves with a more sympathetic disposition' (p. 12).

How does the volume fare according to its stated aims? There is actually little engagement with any dominant caricatures of the second generation Reformer. Even the oft-criticized monergism of Calvin's soteriology (mentioned in the Introduction) receives sparse attention throughout. The book is rather a collection of different scholars writing on their various interests in Calvin. They write with, and with a view to forming in others, a hermeneutic of trust towards their subject and it is in this way that the book is an overall success. Nearly every contribution has one eye on Calvin and another on contemporary implications, and where particular essays shine there are significant benefits for the reader.

Three chapters stood out for this reviewer. Robert Doyle's discussion of Calvin's trinitarian theology, demanding at points, is careful and detailed. Attention is given to Calvin's account of the immanent relations of the divine persons; Calvin stresses 'thinking recursively from the unity to the Persons, and Person to Person, and Persons to unity' (p. 105). Doyle teases these things out of Calvin's expressions and helps the reader think more deeply by seeking to build from Calvin's content to broader strategies in trinitarian theology. Mark Thompson on Calvin's christology similarly manages to combine careful commentary with a high level of analysis, with the result that Calvin's understanding of Christ as Mediator receives illuminating exposition in its historical setting, its biblical contours and its theological commitments.

The most interesting essay, however, comes from Peter Jensen. Formerly Principal of Moore College, he reflects on the legacy of D. Broughton Knox's attempt to place engagement with Calvin right at the heart of the Moore curriculum. It is a fascinating chapter with rich insights for anyone involved in theological education. Jensen is astute on Calvin's legacy for today and it is arguably this chapter which best succeeds in countering Calvin's detractors. Of most use to the contemporary church is not Calvin himself, so much as the God whom Calvin knew and, in particular, the way in which Calvin knew him and was known by him. Jensen concludes:

This theology [the majesty of God and the depravity of man] is the best explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the world in which we live. It confronts each of the cultural forces which we see around us: the worship of science, the false anthropology, atheism as a protest movement, the idolatry of superstition. Its summons to us to know God in the way in which God has made himself known is exactly what is needed, if we are to have within a seminary not merely an educational institution but an authentic proving ground for shaping those who would preach the gospel and pastor churches (p. 272).

That one particular college has maintained its theological education along such lines is sufficient evidence of Calvin's staying power. This volume should prove a useful resource for others seeking to understand and disseminate the same theological vision.

David Gibson, High Church, Hilton, Aberdeen

Calvin at the Centre. By Paul Helm. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-1995-3218-6. 368 pp. £65.00

As a follow-up to his earlier book, *Calvin's Ideas* (2004), this new work further showcases Paul Helm's ability to see interconnections between ideas. It is an attempt to make links, sometimes unsettling, between those who came before Calvin and those who came after, finding 'sources but also heirs.' Helm is able to trace some of the fundamental 'instabilities' in Calvin and show how the following generations inherit and perpetuate them. It is a book full of strange bedfellows, 'what ifs', and classic Helm wit.

In 'The Knowledge of God and Ourselves' (ch. 1), Helm stands Calvin right alongside Descartes due to their shared Augustinian heritage that stresses the possibility of an immediate knowledge of God. (Does one get the immediate sense that Helm enjoys being provocative?!) This leads to a comparison and contrast of Augustinian 'reflexivity' in both Calvin and Descartes, for whom it is more of a procedure than Calvin's intuitive way

of knowing. Helm takes this further in chapter 2, 'Descartes and Reformed Orthodoxy', wondering why Cartesianism never took hold after Calvin to the extent that Aristotelianism did and stressing that Calvin is 'sufficiently elastic' to accommodate it (as evidenced in Leiden in the 17th C.). His third and final epistemological chapter brings Thomas into this question of 'how is it that we know' and discovers that Calvin and Thomas agree on internal and external testimonies. Calvin's greater reliance, however, upon the personal presence of the Spirit as the transcendent 'witness' gives rise to, what Helm calls, an 'instability' which is later carried over into the 17th C. debates of Bayle, Tuckney, and Whichcote.

The next seven chapters range over topics such as God's 'visibility,' in which Helm defends Augustine – and Calvin, by consequence – from Gunton's charge of not having a God 'Christian enough'. (In a move with perhaps more shock value than anything else, Helm wonders whether it is God's divinity that is most 'visible' while that which is most hidden could be his three-personedness!) Thomas makes another appearance in a chapter on providence and predestination, while Anselm is considered as a source for atonement theology, with his own 'heirs' in Reformed Orthodoxy who prefer a more scholastic method to Calvin's penchant for starting with the 'concrete blessings of being in Christ.' Augustine re-enters the scene in 'Calvin the Compatibilist', where Helm re-examines Calvin's determinism for Stoic roots (and its reception in Gill and Edwards) and again in 'Duplex Gratia' (along with other of Calvin's 'heirs,' Turretin and John Hare). In this latter chapter, Helm makes the fascinating point that Turretin's 'locus' methodology cannot support Calvin's organic relation between justification and sanctification (as Calvin's more 'biblical' metholodology, centring on 'union with Christ' could), while Calvin's doctrine of *sola fida* could have been strengthened by Turretin's 'locus' methodology. The work closes with a controversial look at pure nature and common grace, arguing (against Bavinck) that the innovation in the 16th C. is not the Reformed doctrine of 'common grace' but Cajetan's unorthodox doctrine of 'pure nature.'

For this reader, the question that persists even from Helm's previous volume is: Can we, should we talk about Calvin's *ideas*? As Helm's first chapter reveals, treating 'ideas' as things in and of themselves can distort the idea, particularly if it comes from a person as committed to being a pastor as was Calvin. For example, Helm calls both Calvin and Descartes 'reflexive,' but history has shown that this Cartesian reflexivity, turned into method, bears little resemblance to anything Calvin espoused. Nevertheless, *Calvin at the Centre* displays Helm's ability to discover Calvin's 'ideas' even when they are expressed in language very different from Calvin's own. While this interpretive interest has its weaknesses, the

strengths of doing so come to the fore in this book – the ability to analyze and scrutinize ideas (not necessarily set in their context) allows for fun, surprising discoveries – about Calvin, his sources, and his heirs.

Julie Canlis, Methlick

Calvin and Commerce: The Transforming Power of Calvinism in Market Economies. By David W. Hall and Matthew D. Burton. Philipsburg: P&R, 2009. ISBN 978-1-5963-8095-0. 256 pp. $17.99.

David Hall has written several books on Calvin over the past couple years as part of his Calvin 500 series, and to tackle the issue of Calvin and economics, he partnered with professional economist Matthew Burton. Hall and Burton seek to analyze how the teachings of Calvin relate to the assumptions governing modern capitalist economies, and how we should act today in light of these teachings. In six chapters, they examine the themes of Creation, Fall, Redemption, Philanthropy, Sanctification and Service, and Eschatology, first expounding the theological and ethical loci in Calvin's writings and then applying them to current debates about economic policy. Such a collaborative undertaking is very promising, as theology and economics are in great need of creative dialogue. But it does risk foundering on the rocks that have shipwrecked so many similar ventures, as rival sets of assumptions are tossed together in an uneasy hodge-podge. This book, unfortunately, does not set a clear enough course for itself to successfully navigate these treacherous waters.

At the outset, we are left unsure about the main point. Is it a tribute to Calvin, as the thrust of the Calvin 500 Series would suggest? A tribute to capitalism, as the summary would suggest? Or is it both? The title suggests the book intends to be a contribution to the never-ending (but often still fruitful) discussion of Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Yet neither of the authors are historians, and neither show much interest in the period 1600-1900, the crucial one for testing any claims about the historical relationship between Calvinism and capitalism, nor do they seriously engage with Weber or his interlocutors. More important to them than the concrete social history is the relationship between ideas, Calvin's theology and capitalism in the abstract.

A critical step in establishing this relationship is the provision of clear definitions of these two complex and hotly-debated subjects. But such are absent. Moreover, most of the key connections are drawn without clear support from Calvin's writings, which when quoted seem to be far less sanguine about the beneficial possibilities of wealth and far more sober about its dangers than do these authors. It is admittedly a difficult task to build a conceptual bridge from large theological dogmas like creation to

specific economic policies from a later period. But the solution is not to skip the bridge entirely and ask the readers to join in a leap of faith across the murky chasm, as Hall and Burton seem to repeatedly do.

The ethical dimension of the task—endorsing certain economic attitudes—demands even more care and responsibility. Again, definitional clarity is crucial. But here also we lack sensitivity to the differences between, for example, today's consumer capitalism and the thrifty capitalism that Weber describes and Smith advocates. More importantly, ethical recommendations demand a clear standard: on what basis are either capitalism or Calvinism to be judged good? Hall and Burton seem to assume the merits of both, and thus seek only to bring both into conjunction that each may gain further lustre by sharing in the radiance of the other. However, such an uncritical approach will only satisfy readers who share these assumptions.

Hall and Burton may respond that both Calvinism and capitalism are measured against the standard of Scripture, which they believe clearly endorses both. But their appeals to Scripture are selective. Aside from certain passages in Proverbs, many passages that speak quite directly of economic matters (e.g., Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15, many passages of the Major and Minor Prophets, and James 5) are overlooked in favour of texts that seem to bear a more tenuous relationship to economic questions. They interact with only a few of Jesus' many engagements with the problems of wealth and poverty and instead are content with the simple assertions that 'contrary to the predominant modern liberal perception of Jesus—which views him as a glorified social worker or as a political activist and advocate for the oppressed, who constantly prattled about the poor and economic empowerment—relatively few teachings of Jesus normatively address the treatment of the economically poor' (pp. 181-2) and that 'he seemed to be convinced that poverty would continue as part of the human condition, and he did not institute definite vehicles to alleviate it' (p. 141). Such a judgement about the Gospels will likely fail to satisfy those who take Jesus' words with more political seriousness.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle this book sets for itself is its misidentification of its opponent. From the beginning, the authors are concerned to defend wealth and business against those who believe that wealth is morally evil, and in response they seek to justify the goodness of wealth in the abstract as something created by God. Few moderns, however, believe that wealth in the abstract is evil. What they oppose is unjust distributions or uses of wealth, with large accumulations of purely private wealth being atop the list. In response, it does little good to claim that 'wealth is created by God', because while the general bounty of creation and its productive capacity are created by God, the distribution of wealth and its

specification into private property is a human, not a divine action, and one that like any other human action is subject to evaluation according to norms of justice. The authors' attempt to point to providence as that which distributes wealth, and thus legitimates wealth inequalities, is no more to the point than an attempt to defend all wars as providential.

Hall and Burton have opened up many important points of conversation in this crucial field, and, hopefully, others will take them up and carry this conversation forward in coming years.

W. Brad Littlejohn, University of Edinburgh

Political Grace: The Revolutionary Theology of John Calvin. By Roland Boer. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press (UK: Alban Books), 2009. ISBN 978-0-6642-3393-8. 176 pp. £16.99.

Calvin in the Public Square: Liberal Democracies, Rights, and Civil Liberties. By David W. Hall. Philipsburg: P&R, 2009. ISBN 978-1-5963-8099-8. 400 pp. $19.99.

Despite the common caricature of John Calvin as the stern Genevan authoritarian, many scholars have argued that his theology was in fact a dynamic, even revolutionary, cultural and political force. The theology of Calvin and his successors, it is argued, lies behind the early modern interest in constitutionalism, social contract theory, democracy, and even—according to some—political pluralism. However, while the modernized or radicalized Calvin has become popular in diverse ideological camps, these interpretations have been forced to wrestle with what we might call 'the historical Calvin'—that is, the John Calvin who was rather reluctant to embrace more extreme political measures in his own day.

Roland Boer pushes Calvin toward the far left side of the political spectrum, arguing that the reformer's conservative instincts were too little and too late to divert the revolutionary trajectory of his own ideas. Due to its brevity, Boer's study is appropriately limited in focus, emphasizing the internal dynamics of Calvin's writings on political authority rather than various external, social, and intellectual influences (a curious move for a Marxist). Boer suggests that many ideas we now associate with conservative—perhaps authoritarian—Christianity were in Calvin's day far more politically volatile. A high view of the singular authority of the Bible worked to undermine the ecclesial hierarchy of late medievalism. An emphasis on human fallenness accompanied an equally strong view of the transformative power of grace—a grace which animated a radical view of Christian freedom, thereby threatening the status quo of corrupt political structures.

For all this, Boer notes that whenever Calvin advances to the precipice of radicalism, the reformer instinctually retreats back to safer ground, apparently discarding his revolutionary theology in favor of a more pragmatic and conservative social system. Boer himself clearly disapproves of this inconsistency, preferring the moments when the *Institutes* sound more like *Das Kapital*. In truth, Boer manages to raise more than a few 'red' flags—so to speak—in his reading of Calvin, and there is much in *Political Grace* that rings true. However one interprets the social history of Calvinism, Boer succinctly demonstrates that the theology of Calvin could at least permit a radical re-imagining of the post-medieval world. His work is quite readable, and, for better or worse, his narrative is not bogged down by an abundance of external scholarly references.

Unfortunately, while Calvin's 'revolutionary' texts are certainly worthy of attention, Boer's central argument concerning the tension in Calvin's theology is less than convincing. While Boer stresses Calvin's transformational rhetoric, he generally ignores or dismisses Calvin's Augustinian eschatology. Yet it is precisely this which helps frame the reformer's discussion of the relationship between the civil and spiritual kingdoms—the 'twofold government' of humanity. By maintaining the centrality of the future eschatological state, Calvin divested the civil kingdom of any ultimate authority, even in its own sphere – hence, the appearance of radicalism. At the same time, while political authority belongs properly to the temporal *saeculum*, it still serves as a proleptic context for the Christian's heavenly pilgrimage. For Calvin, there is an appropriate—even necessary—tension between eschatological expectations and immanent practice. While Boer does well to emphasize the radical implications of the *Institutes* and other texts, his professed discomfort with eschatological tension leaves him ill-equipped to translate the overarching narrative of Calvin's political thought. In short, there is too much impatience in Boer's Calvin.

On the other side of the ideological spectrum stands David Hall, a Presbyterian pastor who has authored multiple books on Calvin covering an impressive range of topics. In his volume, Hall argues that Calvin's political thought and that of his heirs led directly to the development of modern democracy and to the establishment of human rights and freedom of conscience. As a work of intellectual history, the book provides a clear narrative of the parallel development of Calvinist and Western liberal thought. Hall's extensive outlines of Reformation and Puritan political tracts are an excellent introduction to the material.

Although the book presents a good summary of the Calvinist political tradition, many of its broader historical arguments and reconstructions are rather problematic. Hall ably demonstrates the relationship between

Calvinist thought and Western politics, but he does so to the marginalization of other (perhaps more meaningful) factors. For example, his treatment of pre-revolutionary American politics gives the reader a rather one-sided interpretation of Calvinist contributions that minimizes the growing influence of Enlightenment theories. Hall wishes to credit the Calvinist tradition for America's founding, which perhaps prompts his curious argument that the popularity of Calvinist doctrine did not decline significantly until after 1776. This interpretation is highly problematic (and might be explained by Hall's surprising reliance on non-standard sources like Francis Schaeffer and Rousas Rushdoony).

It would be unfair to discredit Hall's project for choosing to emphasize the Calvinist influence over others, e.g. voluntarism, social contract theory, and English common law. However, Hall's work would have benefited from more critical reflection on the complicated relationship of the various strains of Reformed orthodoxy to emerging liberal theory. Hall's narrative presents unambiguous heroes (the Calvinists) and villains (rationalists, Unitarians, and transcendentalists), yet does not examine the internal inconsistencies and social contexts that would undermine such categorical distinctions. For instance, Hall suggests that the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity precludes political utopianism. However, many Calvinist societies, like late Puritan New England, were strongly influenced by a strain of civic perfectionism—a trait later inherited by the more revolutionary Emersonians.

The relationship between Reformed social thought and modern political theory has received renewed attention lately. At the very least, the interest in Calvin displayed by such dissimilar scholars as Boer and Hall shows that the Calvinist tradition continues to haunt the modern political imagination. In fact, such divergence of interpretation reminds us that the line of descent from the Genevan reformer to the modern West is more complicated than it may appear at first glance and, perhaps, is a cautionary tale against the endeavor to justify one's preferred contemporary political ideology by appeal to Calvinism.

David P. Henreckson, University of Notre Dame

Theosis *in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*. By Myk Habets. Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. ISBN 978-0-7546-6799-5. x + 212 pp. £55.00.

T. F. Torrance's ecumenical engagement, especially with the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, was well know. His conversations occurred while remaining embedded in the Scottish Reformed tradition. Much of his engagement with the broader Christian tradition came pri-

marily from his reading of patristic sources, along with earlier reformed theologians (e.g., Calvin and McLeod Campbell).

Habets offers the first detailed work exploring Torrance's employment of *theosis*, a theme he finds to be often 'misunderstood or ignored in critical studies of [Torrance's] theology' (p. 14). Habets argues that while 'not *the* central point', it is an 'essential part' of his dogmatics, and 'a necessarily crucial integrating theme within his overall theological *oeuvre*' (p. 16). This is qualified by an onus Habets embraces. Admitting direct references to the term are rare in Torrance's work, although Habets displays some occasionally, the 'conceptuality' and 'material content' of *theosis* are pervasive.

Amidst dismissive criticism from those refusing to find *theosis* in Torrance, Habets argues that its presence is robust. *Theosis* is seen bearing functional cognates with Torrance's ideas of 'union, communion and participation' as well as 'engrafting, spiritual union, sacramental union and cognitive union', which are also in Greek patristic theology (pp. 108-9). Union between God and humanity—*theosis*—is based on the mutual mediation of the Son and Spirit, moving God humanward and man Godward.

It is the union of God with full humanity in Christ that enables humans to participate, by the Spirit's working, in Christ's full humanity, united to him. From this union with Christ, communion with God is realised. Jesus became the vicarious Man on behalf of others, deifying humanity in his incarnation and ascension, enabling believers to participate in his ascended humanity and consequently in the fellowship of the Trinity. This communion and *theosis*, however, is only made possible *through the Spirit*, whose work is never independent from the Son. While Torrance's position of union with Christ is distinct from 'divinisation', Habets highlights that this is nevertheless a reality with 'ontological import', not just spiritual. For Torrance, justification is declaration *and* deification. This soteriological participation in Christ points forward to the reality of 'full creaturely participation in the triune God', which indicates '*theosis* as the goal of the Christian life' (p. 179).

Habets is not uncritical of Torrance throughout, identifying tensions within his thought. He mainly relegates criticism and raises unanswered questions toward the end of the last major chapter and in the short concluding chapter. The relationship between Torrance and Barth is also highlighted throughout. Torrance's work is shown to give fruitful soil for further ecumenical dialogue and for furthering developments within Reformed theology.

This book's groundbreaking argumentation is unyielding. And while not alone in articulating Torrance's theology in language other than

what the Scottish theologian used (cf. the reference to Hunsinger, p. 178), the evidence amassed in this work is replete. In its erudition, laden with Latin and Greek terms common to Torrance's work, and being the fruit of Habets's PhD work from the University of Otago under Ivor Davidson (now at University of St Andrews), the manner of presentation of the evidence might be tedious reading for some (although the extensive index is helpful). Yet being able to read Torrance in light of Habets's research on this critical, dominant theme found in Torrance's corpus is a great reward that the effort this New Zealander has put forth to greatly serve readers of Torrance.

Jason S. Sexton, University of St Andrews

Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity. By Paul D. Molnar. Great Theologians Series; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009. ISBN 978-0-7546-5229-8. viii + 373 pp. £16.99.

The purpose (and outstanding achievement) of this volume is to show how T.F. Torrance's 'theological method and all his major doctrinal views were shaped by his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity' (p. ii). Paul Molnar, Professor of Systematic Theology at St. John's University, New York, takes the reader by the arm and leads them step by step through the set of theological decisions and convictions that Torrance makes in piecing together his trinitarian theology. Helpful and abundant footnotes guide readers who want to go deeper on a particular topic. The flow is orderly – flowing more naturally and logically than many of Torrance's own books which often consisted of a series of chapters which had been used for occasional purposes in other contexts. The prose is enjoyable, neither simple nor unnecessarily complex. Without talking down to the reader, Molnar's book reads like a theological tutorial, a calm (but assertive) apologetic for orthodox trinitarian faith.

The book begins with an introductory chapter which provides some personal and cultural background to Torrance's life and work. Unlike several other works on Torrance's theology (most notably, Alistair McGrath's, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (T&T Clark, 1999)) in which his interaction with science looms large, Molnar uses only seven pages to note the considerable contribution that Torrance makes in discussions between science and theology. Molnar's aim is to put these in their larger context – namely, that Torrance's interest in and attention to natural science is simply a 'natural' extension of his realist methodology which provides an appropriate methodological analogy. As Molnar concisely states, 'Torrance pursued this scientific theology within a particular context' (p. 29).

Chapter 2 is the foundational chapter of the book, demonstrating how Torrance conceives the mutual conditioning of theological knowledge and godliness in the Apostolic mind as well as the way in which the doctrine of the Trinity became the 'ground and grammar' of the early church. Here one sees that Torrance's method is far deeper than merely proof-texting Scripture, for he penetrates into the dualistic ways of thinking which prevent us from grasping the full extent of God's revelation in Christ.

The next six chapters display Torrance's theology across the core dogmatic *loci*: God the Father and creation, Jesus Christ and incarnation and atonement, the Holy Spirit, resurrection, ascension, the church, sacraments and ministry. The material lends itself to either a sequential reading or a topical 'drop in' according to the reader's immediate concern. Throughout, Molnar is careful not to be repetitive and yet he guides the reader along, helping to make connections between what has come before and what is yet to come.

The only disappointment in the book is the concluding chapter in which Molnar fields critiques of Torrance's theology. This is the least carefully organized chapter, devoid of the section headings which were so helpful to the reader throughout. The conversation 'partners' also tend to be a bit dated, with most of them being drawn from Torrance's published interaction with several theologians in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* edited by Elmer M. Colyer (Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

Even with this weakness, Molnar's book remains an exceptionally cohesive and illuminating work. Without a doubt it is the most significant secondary work on Torrance's theology published to date, and should be considered an essential reference and study guide for anyone who intends to seriously wrestle with the theology of T. F. Torrance.

George W. Ziegler, King's College, University of Aberdeen

Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ. By Thomas F. Torrance; edited by Robert T. Walker. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-84227-607-5. 371 pp. £14.99.

There can be no question that T. F. Torrance is one of those few gifted theologians who, with both grace and doggedness, was unapologetic about the value of serious systematic theology. Beginning in the late 1930's and continuing in some form until his death in 2007, Torrance's work as a teacher, author, and ecumenical leader helped shape various aspects of the theological discussion that remains with us to this day. He avoided the fads, instead soaking himself in historical theology and constructive statements. His doggedness made it possible for a whole generation after him to gain confidence and credibility, but it appears hard to imagine the

renewal of systematic theology without Torrance's consistent voice gracing much of the twentieth century.

Given Torrance's stature as a central figure in this revitalization of systematic theology, it is a great delight to now have two final volumes to add to his prolific career. *Incarnation: The Person and Work of Christ* appeared in 2008, and *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* came out at the end of 2009. Both volumes are heavily based on lectures that Torrance first delivered to students in his Christian Dogmatics class at New College, covering the period from 1952-1978. Yet these are not merely his lectures, as there has been an enormous amount of careful editing that went into this task.

While some of the early revision work was done by Torrance himself, the majority of this labour of love was sustained by the efforts of Robert Walker, one of Torrance's nephews. He carefully has hunted down citations, added cross-references, provided a fair introduction, and included detailed end notes that amplify the text with further Torrance material for interested readers. There are times when some of the transitions between sections appear to me a bit rough, especially when skipped over material is moved to the end notes. But generally the editorial decisions are reasonable and successfully implemented. Overall, because of the nature of this work originating as lectures, as well as because of Walker's gentle editorial hand, these volumes will prove to be some of the most readable books from Torrance's vast collection.

It should be noted that much of the material here is touched on in Torrance's other publications. But nowhere does so much come together in the way it is mapped out in these two volumes. And there are certainly whole sections that bear new gems for readers to unearth. For example, in this *Incarnation* volume, one finds careful discussions about theological methodology, the place of history and historiography, the role of tradition and exegesis, as well as constructive explorations of such problems as the reality of sin, which he unpacks in terms of alienation and contradiction. Furthermore, there is a detailed addendum on eschatology that will prove interesting to many, especially since this particular material seems to originate around 1950, which allows one to see how Torrance seeks to incorporate the eschatological discussions from the first half of the twentieth century.

In the end, I believe scholars will greatly appreciate having these two volumes to further map out the development of Torrance's christological orientation that governs all of his theology. And a new generation of students will now enjoy a more accessible way into Torrance's theology. This is good news for everyone.

Kelly M. Kapic, Covenant College

Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ. By Thomas F. Torrance; edited by Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. ISBN 978-0-8308-2892-0. 489 pp. $35.00.

The Christian world almost experienced a great loss when T. F. Torrance suffered a stroke in 2005. At that time, he was preparing for publication his lectures on christology. But thanks to Robert Walker, we now have them. This is the second volume, which Walker warns must be read in close connection to its predecessor, *Incarnation*, because only together do they comprise the whole of Torrance's lectures on the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Atonement is a dense work in which most significant themes of theology are richly interwoven in Torrance's unique style. This could lead readers, especially those new to Torrance, into to some confusion and the sense of being overwhelmed! However, thanks to a very detailed synopsis following the table of contents and a lengthy editor's introduction, one is able to maintain both a sense of clarity with respect to the main emphasis in each chapter and the overall direction of the work. There are also two bonuses which follow the twelve chapters, an 'Epilogue: The Reconciliation of the Mind' and a 'Brief Guide to Further Reading'.

Interestingly (and of great significance for Torrance's views on controversial topics such as limited atonement and universalism), the first note of this book is not the triune relationship within God himself nor between covenant and atonement, but 'the mystery of the atonement.' Torrance writes: 'the innermost mystery of atonement and intercession remains mystery: it cannot be spelled out, and it cannot be spied out. This is the ultimate mystery of the blood of Christ, the blood of God incarnate, a holy and infinite mystery which is more to be adored than expressed' (p. 2). The remainder of chapter 1 concentrates on the covenantal framework of the atonement. Those familiar with Torrance's works will recognize both in this chapter and throughout the work a characteristic blend of doxological and biblical theology which distinguished Torrance from most of his contemporaries.

The focus of chapters 1-6 is the cross. Torrance works out the relationships between the OT background and the works of Christ, all of which culminates in Torrance's heuristic use of the *munus triplex*. That is, Torrance develops his multi-facetted theology of the atonement by first providing the many biblical categories and relationships which are subsequently employed as components of the atoning person and work of Christ. This work of Christ finds its complete meaning only in relation to the fullness of his person as both Son of God and as God the Son. Torrance's affinity for a clear integration of the OT and the NT leads him to

Hebrews, which he employs as his hermeneutical lens through which to understand Christ's work.

Determined by the sequence of salvation-history, chapters 7-12 explore the relationship between resurrection and atonement. If the first half of the book explored biblical categories, then this half can be seen as plumbing christological categories. For example, in 'The Resurrection of Jesus Christ', Torrance follows his survey of resurrection with the three interwoven themes of (a) the resurrection and the work and being of the incarnate God, (b) the relationships between the *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* of Christ to various aspects of his decent and resurrection, (c) the relationship of the virgin birth to the resurrection.

This volume is a gift. It is carried out in deep awareness of God's grace towards humanity in Christ and his Spirit, likewise of the Bible, patristic theology, and John Campbell's work. The result is a theology of the atonement along the lines of Jesus' vicarious representation of humanity before God that avoids what Torrance considers to be crude theologies of the atonement, including penal substitution. It is now incumbent on the evangelical world to clarify its relationship to Torrance and to appropriate the best of his rich view of the atonement.

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Scripture: A Very Theological Proposal. By Angus Paddison. London: T&T Clark, 2009. ISBN 978-0-567-03424-3. 170 pp. £19.99.

Like most writing in the vein of 'theological interpretation of Scripture', Angus Paddison accepts Barth's insight that Scripture is not an artifact, a lifeless deposit subject to human utility, but is a living event under divine prerogative, effective only within a divinely established economy which is transcendent and transformative of human being. Consequently, Paddison begins by specifying the divine order in which Scripture happens and is properly perceived. He turns to P. T. Forsyth's account of Scripture as an instrument of the Gospel and extends it by way of Stanley Hauerwas's ecclesiology where worship practices and liturgical action cultivate the habits necessary for perceiving and receiving God's grace. As the entailment of the Gospel, the church is integral to the divine economy. He criticizes John Webster for an underdeveloped ecclesiology, attributing it to a failure to break free from a competitive understanding of divine and human agency. Paddison probably puts his finger on a deficiency, but surely this is an ecclesiological not metaphysical disagreement with Webster, surely he mistakes Webster's Reformed prioritization of Scripture over the church for opposing divinity and humanity.

The second chapter issues a common complaint against and correction to the rationalist way of relating the Bible to Christian ethics. An exploration of John's Gospel comprises the next chapter, which sees Paddison arguing the relatively uncontroversial point that Scripture requires doctrinal reflection. Chapter 4, 'Preaching and Scripture', ends up being more about preaching than about Scripture, while the final chapter on reading the Bible in the university moves in ways that will be familiar to those who have read the relevant literature.

Has Paddison fully grasped Webster's critique of proposals like his? Webster may be brisk on the church and concrete human action, that is, he may offer little beyond a 'moral ontology.' But that is because he is convinced that theology, fundamentally, is talk about God not merely talk about how humans relate to God or even the effects of God's work. Since Paddison spends his time chastening certain academic discourses or talking about the church's work, I think he proves there is something to Webster's worry.

In fact, 'a very theological proposal' may be a misnomer. First, there is not a unified proposal here, but several independent essays, revised from previous publication, themselves not proposals so much as corrections of what Paddison sees as misconceptions, most of which are dealt with similarly in the existing literature. Second, this is not a bibliology. Most seriously, there just isn't much *sustained* theological reflection in these pages. It would seem that a theological proposal, especially a 'very' theological proposal, would consist primarily of concentrated contemplation of the divine reality and activity. Instead, the book is mostly a patchwork of other recent proposals that Paddison collects and integrates. It is probably better understood as musings on topics common to the literature on theological interpretation that gesture toward a theology of Scripture.

James R. A. Merrick, University of Aberdeen

Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture. By Peter J. Leithart. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-6025-8069-5. viii + 254 pp. £19.99.

Peter Leithart is a prolific author and reader, and these six chapters show him in vintage form, addressing important issues in his Leitharted (lighthearted?) way. He draws on his reading everything from Dante's *Divine Comedy* to 'The Three Little Pigs' to James Joyce's *Ulysses* in order to broaden our conception of what is involved in exegesis. *Deep Exegesis* pushes us beyond our grammatical-historical comfort zone to confront the letter of the text in all its glorious fullness.

Leithart believes we should not confuse literacy (or 'hermeneutics of the letter') with a rigid literalism. Deep exegesis partakes of both special and general hermeneutics: to read with Jesus and Paul (think New Testament use of the Old) is not to employ 'some bizarre form of sacred hermeneutics' (p. viii) but rather to become a more sensitive and sophisticated reader.

The words of the Bible are not train cars that transport semantic grain from author to reader. The so-called 'container' theory of meaning is not deep but shallow. It is blind to the many things words do, many of them novel and surprising. Poetic words in particular do more than label or denote: they evoke and connote, echo and reverberate, such that the reader with ears to hear will detect multiple overtones.

As events take on new properties in light of later events, so texts (the event of someone saying something) take on new properties in light of further events/sayings. Commenting on Matthew's citation of Hosea 11:1, Leithart claims that Matthew gives 'new meaning' to Hosea by extending, not violating, the letter, thus connecting two events. Such typology, however, is not unique to Scripture: Hitler gives 'new meaning' to Wagner.

Leithart makes his strongest case for an exegesis of letters in those chapters where he shows what literary competence looks like in practice. Deep exegesis is like getting a joke whose meaning is often a function of what is not explicitly stated. It's a matter of thinking 'outside the text' (p. 124), of knowing the relevant information and having the requisite sensibility.

Deep Exegesis is not a textbook but a *cri de coeur* from an interpreter-performer who cares about much more than playing (i.e., parsing) the right notes: 'A great performer wants to get as much as he can from the correct notes he plays' (p. 208). Leithart has written a primer for would-be pianists: a series of hermeneutical finger exercises, six lessons for exegetes who want to get beyond note-playing to making beautiful textual music. As with music, so with Scripture: the medium is intrinsically connected to the message. Modern hermeneutics treats the text like a husk, however, to be disposed with as quickly as possible in order to find the propositional pearl or moral lesson inside.

The pearl of great price hid in the biblical texts is the body of Christ—Jesus, yes, but also the church. Leithart uses the story of Jesus' healing the man born blind (John 9) as his primary case study, offering no less than five different readings in an interpretive tour-de-force that runs hermeneutical circles around cut-and-parse approaches typical of grammar-laden exegesis.

Interestingly, Leithart does not read under the banner of theological interpretation of Scripture, but chooses instead to speak in more general

terms about entering into the depths of the text. Some readers may thus regret Leithart's decision not to define meaning. To these he would no doubt say, 'Here's spit in your eye', preferring, like Jesus, to rub his hermeneutical clay-and-spittle on our mind's eye, thus enabling/anointing us to see and hear all the riches of Christ in the music of the text.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Wheaton College Graduate School, Wheaton, IL USA

Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics. Edited by Markus Bockmuehl and Alan Torrance. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8010-3601-9. 240 pp. £12.99.

This collection of vibrant and often difficult essays in theological interpretation originated with a 2007 colloquium at the University of St Andrews. In these pages, some of the most exciting names in contemporary theology take turns answering the question, 'To what extent, and on what grounds, does the New Testament shape and prescribe Christian theology?' The editors are right to acknowledge the 'eclectic, partial and limited' nature of the project. (Not least of all, one might reasonably have hoped in these essays for more sustained readings of specific passages of Scripture.) Such a concession, however, does not change the fact that this scholarship models to great effect the move beyond past parochialisms to a healthier and more promising relationship between biblical studies and systematic theology.

Part one offers a compelling exploration of the doctrine-evoking power of Scripture. Ross Wagner probes the neglected matter of the Septuagint's authority for Christian theology. Markus Bockmuehl proposes three notions around which responsible talk of 'the Church' converge. In his essay on the exclusivity of Jesus Christ, Walter Moberly interprets John 14:6 in light of contemporary secularizing pressures that would have Jews and Christians 'find common ground at the expense of traditional theological understandings'. For N. T. Wright, finally, creedal faith bears a necessary and proper function as 'portable narrative' in telling the great story of God.

The essays of part two comprise critical engagement with recent theologians. Specialists will appreciate James Carleton Paget's thesis that, perhaps unconsciously, Albert Schweitzer gradually moved away from an overemphasis upon the historical and cultural contingency of Jesus of Nazareth. Jan Muis considers the work of Karl Barth and Friedrich Mildenberger, concluding that, on the basis of their guiding premises, each thinker should have arrived at a view of Scripture as indirectly prescriptive of Christian doctrine. John Webster offers an appreciative and wide-

ranging, though not uncritical, assessment of the theology of Rowan Williams, for whom Scripture serves as a sign of the temporal transformation of the Christian community by the infinitely resourceful Christ. Finally, readers less familiar with Catholic theology will find Benedict Viviano's piece illuminating, particularly as he highlights three 'breakthrough paragraphs' from the Second Vatican Council's *Dei Verbum* (1965).

Part three features synthetic essays on the normativity of the New Testament for theology and ethics. Oliver O'Donovan argues that, because moral instruction in the Bible is always framed by narrative context, the good or evil of anything is measurable only in light of the purposes of God as they are fully revealed in the incarnation of the Son. In order to facilitate 'teleology without hegemony', Bernd Wannenwetch details four moments in the practice of Scripture reading—perception, discernment, judgment, and giving an account. Finally, two essays approach the question of how the contemporary reader of Scripture might be understood to participate in the thought and culture of the biblical period. Alan Torrance draws on Athanasius and Kierkegaard, locating the possibility of this 'fusion of horizons' in the free presence of God, who brings about a 'reconciled continuity of mind' in the work of the Son and Spirit. Kevin Vanhoozer, by comparison, articulates the theological solution in terms of the 'habits of apostolic judgment' which readers should acquire. Such habits enable us to understand both ourselves and our church communities as 'caught up in the same basic action (though in a new scene) as the primitive church'.

Jeremy Wynne, Whitworth University, Spokane, WA, USA

Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology. Edited by Gary Meadors and Stanley Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. ISBN 978-0-310-27655-5. 371 pp. $19.99.

The book under review picks up both the title and topic of your reviewer's book *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Paternoster, 2004), and it carries the discussion significantly further. It collects and compares four models for moving from the Bible to theology. There are rejoinders by each of the four contributors on the others' proposals, and finally three observers – Mark Strauss, Al Wolters, and Chris Wright – evaluate the whole enterprise.

Walter Kaiser advocates a so-called 'principlizing' approach, in which one begins with the specific commands in Scripture, attempts to discover the principles lying behind them that may be at different levels of abstraction, and then extends their application into our situation. This approach is said not to require going beyond Scripture but rather applying it. Kaiser

illustrates the method with the test-cases of euthanasia, women and the church, homosexuality, slavery, and embryos.

'Principlizing' is certainly necessary and valid. The mistake is to claim that nothing more is required. Indeed, application is not just a matter of fully appropriating biblical principles, but tackling issues not known in biblical times (e.g. medical research). And this raises the question of how one identifies which principles are appropriate for particular problems.

Daniel Doriani offers a 'redemptive-historical' model. Basically, he wants to add a use of biblical narratives as commendations of types of conduct (or warnings): 'Where a series of acts by the faithful create a pattern, and God or the narrator approves the pattern, it directs believers, even if no law spells out the lesson'. He is unhappy about my unease with passages that appear to attribute torture to God. I think he may mistakenly attribute an abandonment of hell to me; rather, I attempt to reinterpret it in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere (e.g. in passages on judgement).

Doriani's cases are gambling, architecture (i.e. safe roofs), and especially women and ministry. I do not see any significant difference here from Kaiser's approach. An indication that the first two views are insufficient is the way in which Kaiser and Doriani, practising essentially the same method, arrive at different conclusions on the place of women in the church.

Kevin Vanhoozer's approach is close to that of Tom Wright in speaking of 'the drama of redemption' and is essentially concerned with our involvement as actors in this drama, who are to show our understanding of Scripture by doing God's will and not just talking or arguing about it. His two case studies are Mary and transsexuality.

I share Kaiser's and Strauss's perplexity; I am baffled as to what I am expected to *do*. It is all far too vague, a set of what are more like ideals without any clear indication of how to attain them. Vanhoozer is certainly right that Scripture reading is meant to lead to changed action and character rather than just intellectual understanding, and his contribution is compatible with all the others. But he doesn't provide any principled guidance for dealing with obscure or ambiguous or culturally-shaped texts.

Fourth, we have William Webb's 'redemptive-movement' model. He makes the basic observation that we can trace in Scripture a set of shifts to a more 'redemptive' style of behaviour compared both with some of Israel's neighbours and earlier biblical teachings, as illustrated by the laws and customs regarding slavery. Webb uses the case of corporal punishment, showing how even evangelical scholars who insist on retaining the biblical teaching regarding chastisement of children nevertheless quietly ameliorate it. He argues that the 'trajectory' found in Scripture

is being traversed further in Christian history, as in the abolition of slavery. Granted that biblical revelation is final and definitive, it nevertheless contains the momentum to take its application further. The movement cannot cease with canonization. Scripture must be read in the light of this momentum.

The other contributors are strongly critical, though I am not convinced their objections really grapple with Webb. Kaiser accuses Webb of reading Scripture against its non-biblical context rather than its inner-biblical context. I cannot see why this is improper; it is an essential part of historical exegesis. Kaiser is also unclear as to how the goals of movement are to be identified. Doriani is more appreciative, though he wishes to tie the results to the grammatical-historical approach. Vanhoozer wants greater clarity regarding the terms used by Webb, and raises the problem of the Holy Spirit as the one ultimate author of Scripture acting in an incremental manner.

Wolters notes that movement beyond ancient Near Eastern culture is not always an improvement, and that detecting it may depend on knowledge not available to the ordinary reader and thus impugn the concept of the perspicuity of Scripture. Yet, if the ordinary reader's knowledge is the criteria, we will likely cease to treat the text historically. Wolters doubts that Webb has a criterion for what is a better ethic beyond Scripture when he detects an 'underlying spirit' in the text that is very similar to contemporary humane and liberal values, and worries that texts may have two contradictory meanings, the 'on the page' meaning and the 'underlying spirit' meaning.

Rejecting a position simply because it is held by secular society seems unjustified. To some extent the secular mind may correspond with this Christian mind, but this may be due to acceptance of Christian influence (e.g. on the abolition of the slave trade). Granted that looking for a better ethic is a risky business, it must be insisted that adhering to a traditional ethic is equally risky and liable to lead to sub-Christian behaviour (e.g. unacceptable forms of physical punishment).

Summing up, I agree with the observation of Chris Wright that the four models are all needed, each being inadequate on its own, and are possibly too similar and complementary to be sharply differentiated or for a choice to be forced among them. Ironically, this book shows an eclectic approach is needed, that different types of biblical material require different interpretative methods. Despite the criticisms made of it, Webb's approach is acknowledged to be grasping something that is going on in Scripture.

It is a pity the book pays little attention to the debate outside the conservative evangelical constituency and to seeing if we can learn anything

from or contribute to it. Vanhoozer does briefly mention Richard Hays. It would have been good to have a much fuller appraisal of Hays's work in this volume. Let this be an encouragement to take the matter further.

I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen

The Bible for Sinners: Interpretation in the Present Time. By Christopher Rowland and Jonathan Roberts. London: SPCK, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-281-05802-0. viii + 119 pp. £10.99.

Rowland (Oxford) and Roberts (Liverpool) observe that when it comes to biblical interpretation, listening to what 'others' have to say – the poor, the marginalized, the 'sinners', in short, the people upon whom Jesus' ministry was focused – is shockingly far from the church's basic practice. In response, they urge reform by recovering the voices of those they see as the Bible's true audience.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 summarize some major ecclesiastical interpretive models championed today by N. T. Wright, the Windsor Report, and the Pontifical Biblical Commission. The authors find much to commend in these models, particularly the role they ascribe on paper to the Holy Spirit. But do these models live up to their own ideals? Not quite. All too often they privilege academic and ecclesiastical authorities, the so-called 'experts' of the Bible's meaning, the modern day 'scribes.' This is at odds with how the Bible talks about the Spirit, specifically the role that Paul assigns to it in Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 2:10-16. The Spirit is not a license for *any* interpretation, but neither is its enabling power restricted to the powerful. Barth's principle of *Sachkritik* – 'getting at the reality of the text... seeking to put into words what a biblical writer like Paul would be saying if he were here right now' (p. 38) – strikes the right balance. *Sachkritik* is the simple, ordinary Christian discipline of attending to the biblical text in order to hear the Word address the contemporary context in the power of the Spirit.

What models listen to ordinary Christians? Chapters 4, 5, and 6 promote several. The contribution of Liberation Theology has been its contextual emphasis, the belief that God speaks *through* the poor and marginalized. Other ordinary voices include 'Christian radicals' from the Northern tradition: Hans Denck, Gerrard Winstanley, William Blake, and William Stringfellow, all in their own way pushed for more imaginative, *this*-worldly interpretation of the Bible. Has the church appropriated their examples? Recent attitudes toward both Liberation and Feminist Theologies suggest not. Yet our authors persist: on what grounds can the church refuse them?

Imagining a debate on divorce between a 'liberal' and a 'conservative' Christian, the authors in chapter 7 illustrate the need for wisdom in interpretation. Say a woman divorces and then remarries. Her children from the first marriage reject this new marriage on 'biblical principles' as living in sin. Who is right in this instance? Is tradition? The Bible? Or is there room for contextual, Spirit-led interpretation of both? The authors succeed in bringing us to the heart of things, and rightfully enjoin us to take on the example of Christ in our personal and corporate deliberations.

Yet a few problems seem to undermine their project. First, despite efforts not to 'devalue tradition' (p. 2), the authors do not instruct us in any way about what the tradition might be there *for* in our interpretive task. In addition, their advocacy of Barth's division between the Word of God as Jesus Christ and the words of Scripture as witness to that Word is not without its debatable features – particularly with regard to the Spirit's past activity in authoring Scripture. Finally, the authors suggest in one place that 'the prime responsibility of a Christian is to find Christ outside, rather than inside, the pages of Scripture' (p. 21). But why not both/and?

For these reasons I recommend the book with some reservation. Its aims, though crucial, call for more complexity than 119 pages could facilitate. Even so, the authors initiate an important conversation. For this they are well worth the read.

Ian Clausen, University of Edinburgh

The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies. By Michael C. Legaspi. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-19-539435-1. xiv + 222 pp. £45.00.

Few studies since Hans Frei's *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (Yale Univeristy Press, 1974) have inspected the hermeneutical transformation effected by modern biblical criticism. Enter Michael Legaspi. He examines the work of influential eighteenth-century biblical scholar Johann David Michaelis whom he believes exemplifies the movement away from viewing the Bible as Scripture, God's governance of the church, to seeing it as an historical artifact useful for scholarly knowledge and cultural progress.

The author considers the interplay between the Bible, the classics, and the formation of the University of Göttingen, the seedbed both for the modern university and for modern theology. Michaelis, who believed the university exists to improve society and refine culture, refashioned biblical studies into the image of classical studies. The Bible deserved academic attention because it is a source of culture enriching for citizens and politicians alike. Accordingly, he tried to revision ancient Israel as an exemplary civilization like Greece and Rome. Though unsuccessful, his

efforts had the effect of inventing an 'academic Bible'. Michaelis, in other words, so alters the nature, purpose, and context of the Bible and its interpretation that he establishes a new nexus of meaning which effectively creates a rival Bible.

Legaspi does not trace Michaelis's approach through to J. P. Gabler who cites Michaelis in his famous address, 'On the Proper Distinction between Dogmatic and Biblical Theology and Their Specific Objectives', which many believe to be the inauguration of the modern biblical theology. But his conclusions are interesting enough. His treatment of Michaelis supports the sentiment that, although the conflict between theological and critical interpretation is usually fought on the grounds of history, in fact the clash is ideological.

This monograph proves a nice supplement to Frei's aforementioned work and will be most profitable when read alongside Thomas Howard's masterful *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (OUP, 2006). It is a significant, insightful contribution to our knowledge of the development of modern biblical interpretation and an important examination of Michaelis's role in such.

James R. A. Merrick, University of Aberdeen

God's Word in Servant-Form: Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck on the Doctrine of Scripture. By Richard Gaffin, Jr. Jacksonville: Reformed Academic Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-9800-3700-5. 107 pp. $12.95.

Even the most cursory survey of recent Anglophone interest in Dutch Neo-Calvinism quickly highlights the doctrine of Scripture as the focus of much debate. In 1980, Jack Rogers and Donald McKim's *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* attempted to pit Amsterdam against Old Princeton on this issue. In doing so, Rogers and McKim portrayed Bavinck and Kuyper – Neo-Calvinism's outstanding dogmaticians – as concerned with Scripture's salvific, rather than verbal, content. In this respect, it was alleged, they sat uncomfortably with their American cousin B. B. Warfield.

In the three following decades, this account of Bavinck and Kuyper has been variously engaged. Indeed, the debate currently lives on via the invocation of Bavinck's name in controversial works such as Andrew McGowan's *The Divine Spiration of Scripture* and Peter Enns' *Inspiration and Incarnation.*

By way of recent developments, one finds the republication (albeit with minor revisions) of Richard Gaffin's 1982-3 piece *God's Word in Servant Form*, which was originally written as a direct challenge to Rogers and McKim. Gaffin offers a fundamentally different picture of Bavinck and

Kuyper on Scripture, one considerably less opposed to Warfield's inerrantism. Two points are crucial in evaluating Gaffin's reply to Rogers and McKim.

The first concerns language. In 2009, the Anglophone reader has access to an outstanding standardized English translation of *Reformed Dogmatics*. Prior to the sterling efforts of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society, however, the situation was somewhat different. In the early 1980s, a comprehensive command of Dutch was essential to an accurate, holistic reading of Bavinck and Kuyper. In this regard, Gaffin's credentials are beyond doubt. His engagement with the Dutch sources, primary and secondary, is impressive.

Secondly, one must consider how convincingly Gaffin presents his reading of Bavinck and Kuyper. Noting the Berkouwerian tendency (reflected by Rogers and McKim) to homogenize Bavinck and Kuyper, the skill with which Gaffin demonstrates the distinctive nuances of both men is reassuring.

In this regard, it is perhaps most notable that he successfully highlights how Rogers and McKim have, in various places, misapprehended Bavinck's most basic concerns (principally organicism versus mechanism). Gaffin also notes that they neglect to mention key sections in Bavinck; for example, his dictum that, 'In the thoughts are included the words, and in the words, the vowels' (*RD* 1.438; Gaffin, p. 84). This fact dents one's confidence in Rogers and McKim somewhat. Gaffin's description of Kuyper follows suit.

Significantly, Gaffin's work accords with the understanding of Bavinck and Kuyper (particularly in relation to Warfield and the doctrine of Scripture) found in the works the Netherlands' current leaders in this area: Dirk van Keulen (*Bijbel en Dogmatiek*, pp. 163-4) and Henk van den Belt (*Autopistia*, p. 312).

Although Rogers and McKim's book has not been reprinted, this re-release of Gaffin's response is justified because a key facet of their presentation of Bavinck and Kuyper contained therein nonetheless continues to resurface in contemporary literature on Scripture: the wedge driven between Amsterdam and Old Princeton. This can be found in McGowan's aforementioned book, for example: while he acknowledges (ironically by citing Gaffin) that Rogers and McKim fundamentally misunderstood Bavinck on various issues, he frustratingly ignores that Gaffin flatly contradicts major features of his own description of Bavinck.

A veteran Dutch theology professor once offered the following sage advice: 'Be careful with most of these new English language books that use Bavinck. Many of them tell far more about the author than about Bavinck.' Gaffin's careful scholarship exempts him from this criticism. He

offers a clear headed, accurate picture of the doctrine of Scripture found in Kuyper and Bavinck which will prove a resource to those encountering newer versions of an old thesis.

James Eglinton, University of Edinburgh

Did the first Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence. By James D. G. Dunn. London: SPCK, 2010. ISBN 978-0-2810-5928-7. viii + 168 pp. £12.99.

As he always does, Prof. Dunn gives us an up to date treatment of a key area of New Testament study, in this instance tied to Christology. The book's title presents the key question the book pursues. In contrast to the work of Larry Hurtado and Richard Bauckham, Dunn argues that worship of Jesus was not common in the earliest period of this new movement, although he qualifies the answer by noting how worship of God the Father through the Son is often what is taking place. He stresses that the focus in such worship is aimed at the Father. Dunn's work looks at the language of worship, its practice, as well as the issues tied to heavenly mediators and divine agents. Last of all, he examines the theme of the Lord Jesus Christ. Key terminology, concepts, and texts are treated with care.

At the end of the book, he warns about Jesusolatry, worship of Jesus that falls short of worship due to the 'One God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (p. 147). He calls it a short circuit of the true worship of God. On the other side, the exalted role of Jesus, which utilizes ideas from Jewish discussion of Wisdom, Word, and divine agents, shows the high position the earliest believers gave Jesus as an embodiment of God and his presence. That position always acknowledged, however, the subordinate position of the Son to the Father. In sum, Dunn argues that the early church believed Jesus embodied the divine presence but was honoured in a manner that kept the focus on God the Father. Dunn crafts a position distinct from Hurtado and Bauckham that argues that Jesus had high honour but something less than what most Christians think and confess about him.

What is one to make of his case? Dunn recognizes that Revelation does present worship of Jesus in chapters 4-5. He argues this is the exception versus the rule. He discusses the *maranatha* invocation as evidence as well, but sees such an invocation like a Jew may have called out to Elijah in hopes of deliverance. Dunn does us a service to remind us that Jesus is not worshipped apart from his relationship to the Father and that the bulk of the attention is given to the Father, especially when it comes to formal terms of worship and acts of worship. But does this say enough,

even while Dunn also is careful to highlight the consistent exalted role Jesus does have?

It is important, perhaps, to note that Dunn's real question could be restated as: Did the early Christians worship Jesus alone or in isolation from the Father? On this point, Dunn brings forth much evidence to show that the answer to this question is mostly 'no'. Nonetheless, this reviewer was left slightly uneasy with the way the issue has been framed. A slight adjustment of his question might yield another emphasis. Did the earliest Christians worship Jesus in conjunction with the Father? Here the answer is likely to be a more resounding 'yes'—and for reasons from texts Dunn either undervalues for their implications or because the issue in the early church was never to consider Jesus apart from the role he had as one sent on a mission from God.

To this reviewer, undervalued texts, among others that also could be noted, include the lack of discussion of the real significance of Paul's invoking Isa 45 as he presents every knee bowing to Jesus in the Phil 2 picture of Jesus' exaltation. Isa 45 is one of the most vigorous defenses of monotheism in the Hebrew Scripture. For that language to apply to Jesus says much about him in a context where divine honor is explicitly what is being described. In 1 Cor 8:4-6, Paul gives a 'binitarian' confession echoing the *Shema* (as Dunn also recognizes) and Jesus is placed on the side of Creator, not creation. This says much about which side of the line he is regarded as residing in ultimately. Appeals here to wisdom like background do not say enough about how Jesus, clearly a distinct entity, is seen. Nowhere is there a development of how Acts 2 has the name of Jesus invoked, even with respect to a religious rite like baptism, an act of authority to forgive sins and an act of worship for sure. This text is especially significant, since calling on the name of the Lord is said to save earlier in the speech in an appeal to Joel 2 that initially looks like an invocation of the God of Israel and that in Joel certainly was a call to God (Acts 2:21 with 30-38). Here Dunn chooses to discuss how Joel 2 is used in Romans 10:9-13, but this is the less developed of the passages related to this idea. Often when faced with a reading that sees Jesus as divine or an option that sees him in close proximity to the divine, Dunn opts for the latter sense or at least argues that is a possible reading (e.g, p. 37, where the parallel of Elijah coming or the latter church's appeal to the saints is invoked as a call for deliverance or aid). Also understated are the implications of a text like Titus 2:13-14, where the appearing of divine glory is the point and not the explicit naming of Jesus as God.

In putting this all together, I think of a see-saw as a child where the weight is on one side of the plank or the other. The evidence Dunn stresses as yielding a more limited perception of Jesus, I would suggest

brings more weight to the other side of the plank, provided we all recall that Jesus is not isolated in his activity from the Father. In other words, Dunn's study reminds us that early believers presented Jesus consistently as part of a hierarchy of relationship in his connection to the one God that extended back before the Creation. In a sense, no one sees the Father without the Son and vice versa. It is a merit of Dunn's study that we never lose sight of this connection nor the way in which it is ranked, although I would tend to weight the overall case as pointing to a more affirmative reply and significance than Dunn gives to the data.

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A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters. By Andreas J. Köstenberger. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. ISBN 978-0-3102-6986-1. 652 pp. £25.99.

The author of the Baker Exegetical Commentary volume on John and New Testament professor at Southeastern Baptist Seminary in North Carolina has set a high standard with this inaugural volume of Zondervan's Biblical Theology of the New Testament series. The work could well have been entitled 'an introduction' as well as a theology, as Köstenberger spends nearly 240 pages before he comes to his actual task. First, he establishes the historical context for John's Gospel and epistles—80s and 90s, respectively, penned by the son of Zebedee, in and around Ephesus, interacting especially with the struggles in Judaism after the fall of the temple. The genre of these documents is Jewish historical narrative combined with elements of Greco-Roman biography, one circular letter and two 'simple, straightforward' letters. Another chapter itemizes in great detail John's overall linguistic and literary style. Then we read a synopsis of the contents of the documents, section by section, with small bits of theological commentary interspersed.

Köstenberger's understanding of the structure of the Gospel of John leads him to find key texts replete with all the major themes of these writings at the beginning (1:1-18), middle (13:1-3) and end (20:30-31) of the Gospel. Once he actually begins his theological analysis, he introduces John's overall worldview and presents at length his use of Scripture. Each of the next nine chapters falls under one of the three strategically placed thematic clusters. Topics addressed include 'The Messiah and His Signs' (from 20:30-31); 'The Word: Creation and New Creation'; 'God: Father, Son, and Spirit'; 'Salvation History: Jesus' Fulfillment of Festal Symbolism'; 'The Cosmic Trial Motif: The World, the Jews, and the Witnesses to Jesus'; 'The New Messianic Community: Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility' (from 1:1-18); and John's 'love ethic,' 'theology of the cross,'

and 'trinitarian mission theology' from 13:1-3. A short concluding section compares John's theology with the other canonical voices.

The theological summaries, of course, merely use the introduction of a theme in one of the three key sections of the Gospel as springboards to range throughout the whole document, and the letters, for material on the same theme. There is a fair amount of repetition from the earlier walk through these documents' contents, because Köstenberger often discusses in turn each passage in which a key theme occurs. He explains that he wrote the volume, as only someone who had already authored a major commentary on much of this material could do, simply by writing out a complete first draft of what he wanted to say based just on Scripture and only then going back and adding footnotes, interacting with secondary literature, especially the most recent scholarship, and editing his text accordingly. Where this interaction is fuller, it is usually because Köstenberger is drawing on earlier, more specialized publications on the topics at hand besides just his commentary.

The value of this approach is that his prose is very readable. The disadvantage is that a lot of the discussion that one might have expected of others' studies and competing views is absent. In other words, with a handful of exceptions, we learn in meticulous detail what Köstenberger thinks John is teaching but not nearly as much about what others have thought. No doubt, because almost all of his previous published work on Johannine literature has been on the Gospel, this document gets much fuller treatment than do the letters.

Helpful charts regularly punctuate the book, along with topical bibliographies at the beginning of each chapter. While Köstenberger has not produced *the* definitive synthesis of every topic that he treats, for a 'one-stop shopping,' but still detailed introduction to the Johannine epistles and Gospel from a conservative evangelical perspective, this book is where students, pastors and scholars alike should turn, now and for some time to come.

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Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God. By J. R. Daniel Kirk. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8028-6290-7. xiv + 245 pp. £23.99.

Unlocking Romans is a distilled version of J. R. Daniel Kirk's doctoral dissertation, completed under the supervision of Richard Hays at Duke University. As indicated by the title, this ambitious project attempts to offer a fresh perspective on Romans by studying the theme of resurrection throughout the letter.

Kirk's main claim about Romans is that the letter is a theodicy. Paul answers the question of God's fidelity to the historical covenant promises given to Israel by pointing to the resurrection of Christ and the inclusion of Gentiles within the church. According to Kirk, the character of Romans as a theodicy comes to the fore when one recognizes the central hermeneutical role the resurrection of Christ plays in Paul's engagement with the Scriptures of Israel.

Following a survey of the functions of resurrection in the literature of Second Temple Judaism, Kirk suggests that the centrality of Christ's resurrection in Romans is signaled by its presence in the bookends of the theological and parenetic argument, Romans 1:1-7 and 15:7-13. From the citation of Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 to the citation of Isaiah 11:10 in 15:12, Kirk claims that Paul consistently (re)reads Israel's Scriptures with a lens shaped by the resurrection of Christ.

Chapters 4-10 are devoted to demonstrating this claim in passages drawn from each major section of the letter. Kirk's cumulative argument is that Paul uses a resurrection-hermeneutic throughout Romans to interpret Israel's Scriptures so that the resurrection of Christ and the Jew-plus-Gentile church appear as the legitimate fulfillment of God's prophetic promises. In the final chapter, Kirk concludes with both theological and practical reflections on theodicy, justification, church unity, and the usefulness of Paul's resurrection-hermeneutic for the church today.

Regarding justification, Kirk asserts that it is a re-working of the Jewish doctrine of God's *vindication* of his covenant people through resurrection at the final judgment. According to Kirk, justification is integral to the theodicy project of Romans because the vindication of God's people is an essential element of the promises that God must fulfil in order to vindicate himself.

As a whole, *Unlocking Romans* proves to be immensely stimulating. It is filled with tantalizing exegetical proposals, and the major debates within Romans on which Kirk does not register an opinion are few. Although some of his proposals are less than persuasive, Kirk draws attention to the importance of resurrection throughout Romans with exegetical sensitivity, resisting the temptation to impose a single grid on how it functions in different passages.

Kirk's synthetic proposal of a Pauline resurrection-hermeneutic, however, is not without problems. In the final chapter, Kirk declares Paul to be a 'revisionist' reader, decrying the possibility of 'organic' connections between Israel's Scriptures and Paul's interpretations. If this were the case, one begins to wonder who would have found such a revisionist theodicy compelling. More importantly, however, Kirk's portrayal of Paul as a *revisionist* reader of Israel's Scriptures stands in stark contrast

to Paul's self-portrayal as one *revealing* mysteries truly contained in the prophetic writings, but hidden in ages past (Rom. 16:25-26). In fact, on the very point where Kirk thinks Paul must employ a resurrection-hermeneutic in order to gain rhetorical leverage (the inclusion of Gentiles), one of Paul's main arguments is a straight-forward chronological reading of the Abraham story (Rom. 4:1-12). Although Paul's encounter with the risen Christ certainly did affect the way he read Scripture, it is doubtful that Kirk's portrayal of Paul as a revisionist reader with an idiosyncratic hermeneutic will ultimately result in anything more than a reductionist account of Paul's engagement with Scripture.

Fortunately, Kirk's exegesis is often better than his theory, and his book is well worth reading for the vigorous engagement he provides on that front.

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