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## REVIEWS

*Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books.* By Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton, IL:Crossway, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4335-0500-3. 362 pp. £19.99.

The author of this important study teaches New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC, and his publications major on the transitional period between the beginnings of Christianity and its consolidation. The growth and development of the Christian canon of Scripture during this time is a major problem that has now returned to the centre of scholarly interest. While not ignoring the historical question, 'How was the canon formed and accepted?', Kruger limits himself to the more theological type of question: 'How can we as believing Christians know that we have the right books in the canon?' Put in other words: is it possible and theologically sound to believe that there is a closed collection of books that can rightly be understood as possessing divine authority for the church? Have we as believing Christians 'intellectually sufficient grounds' (i.e. a rational basis) for affirming that only the 27 books that comprise the New Testament rightfully belong together in it?

The resulting enquiry covers a very wide field, but the author is thoroughly familiar with the ancient sources and the relevant contemporary scholarship, and he brings an acute critical mind to the discussion. The argument is clearly summarised on pp. 23-24. There are three proposed ways of understanding the situation.

First, some think that the canon is created by the church expressing its mind on the matter. Canonicity is thus not so much something inherent in the canonical books that makes them canonical as rather the fact that historically the church conferred authority upon them. The effect is to make canonicity a verdict conferred upon a book by the authority of the church, with the implication that it is a higher authority than the canonical books themselves. And were these books already canonical in the historical period before this ecclesiastical decision? This view makes canonicity something that is done to the books rather than something intrinsic to them. It is a typically Roman Catholic view.

Second, alongside this view there is the 'historically determined model', where the emphasis lies on the historical merits of the canonical books. Historical investigations will show if a book has authentic Jesus tradition or apostolic content. Again the criticism is this subjects the canon to the human investigators whose views may change over time, and it ceases to be the final authority.

Over against these views Kruger expounds and defends the 'self-authenticating' model: 'God has created the proper epistemic environment wherein a Christian's belief in the New Testament canon can be reliably formed' (p. 94). The criterion for canonicity is not an independent principle administered by individuals or the church but 'the way in which the Scripture sets the terms for how its own origins are to be investigated and explored' (p. 85). This was the view of various Reformed theologians, especially Calvin, Owen, Turretin and Bavinck. Kruger admits that this is a circular procedure, but in this case a necessarily circular process. There has to be a providential exposure of canonical books to the church. Providential non-preservation of some documents (1 Cor 5:9) implies that they were not canonical. Canonical books are recognised as such by their inherent divine qualities, 'beauty, efficacy and harmony', but these qualities cannot be perceived by us apart from the internal *testimonium* of the Holy Spirit to believers, and this takes place communally rather than individually. Such books have apostolic origins, canonisation being understood as due to recognition of their apostolicity. But what about doubts concerning the apostolic origins of some books in some scholars? Here Kruger appeals to the combination of self-authenticating qualities and argues that the two ways he rejects above do have a limited legitimate role in this process of recognising and affirming the canonicity of the New Testament books. (Presumably his criticisms of them are directed against using them independently of this basic criterion.)

Developing the topic in greater detail, Kruger maintains that the beauty of the Scriptures is something that is spiritual, not necessarily rhetorical or literary, and there is also their efficacy in bringing God's Word to believers, and their unity and harmony in the message that they severally bring. But the presence of these features is often denied by critics. Kruger has to defend them, and does so by claiming that we have no grounds for thinking that those 'without the Spirit can rightly discern such things'.

It is here that my doubts about some aspects of the argument begin to emerge. The argument is, as Kruger frankly admits, circular: you can only discern these features if you are filled with the Spirit, and if you deny their presence, this is not an indication of their absence but of your lack of the Spirit. Now I know several scholars who find contradictions and errors in Scripture but of whose spirituality and faith I have no doubts but rather will positively affirm it. To say that they are 'without the Spirit' would be a false accusation, based on the fact that they do not see and recognise the divine features (such as inerrancy) that some of us claim that we can see. I suspect also that there is here a complex mixture of phenomena that are perceived by ordinary intellectual means and those that are apparently

perceived by some kind of spiritual insight that I can perceive because I have the Spirit, and if somebody else tells me that she cannot see them, my rejoinder according to Kruger should be to say that she is spiritually blind. Surely, however, if I find a discrepancy between factual information in Kings and in Chronicles, this is a matter of mental competence rather than spiritual declension.

The argument proceeds, secondly, by arguing from the redemptive-historical unity of Scripture and again there is an overlap between what is mentally observed and that which is spiritually discerned. Kruger argues there is a unity based on the christocentric character of the New Testament (and of the Old Testament). But arguably some early Christian books were christocentric yet not canonised, and to describe the *whole* of the Old Testament as christocentric, as is often done, is simply unconvincing to me. Kruger finds a covenantal structure that reflects a genre in some ancient near-eastern documents. But that doesn't make these documents canonical, and there is some further confusion in the argument between literary structure and theological underlying basis.

Third, similar doubts attend the claims made for apostolicity. Apostolicity is the basis of the authority of the New Testament books, apparently referring to the authors being apostles (or being influenced by apostles); this argument depends partly on identifying as many of the authors as possible as actual named apostles and partly also on holding that only the particular writings that got into the canon by this means were apostolic, even though their authors also wrote other Christian documents (back to 1 Cor. 5:9). The writings emerge from the new covenant made by God which had to have documentation. So works like Hebrews (anonymous in the sense that the name of the author has not survived) depend on knowledge gained from an apostle. Some books show authorial awareness of apostolic status. But what about those that allegedly show signs of using somebody else's name, giving the name of (say) Paul but Paul himself did not write them, and doing so in order to deceive the readers? Kruger follows the usual track of noting that in every case there is a cohort of scholars who adopt the minority position that the documents were the actual work of the named author (or written by an amanuensis), and we should follow their example. This can result sometimes in the acceptance of somewhat unlikely hypotheses, such as that Paul himself wrote the Pastoral Epistles but a brilliant theologian (or theologians) wrote Romans and 2 Corinthians, somebody who was far more competent in theology and composition than Paul when left to himself. (Maybe we should stop writing books entitled 'The Theology of Paul' and shift our theme to 'The theology of Tertius?') This specific example is emphatically not a hypothesis adopted by Kruger himself, but one adopted by some other conserva-

tive scholars. But again we are dealing with a characteristic of the books that can be defended or questioned on critical grounds rather than necessarily by some kind of spiritual awareness.

Finally, there is the fact that the early church accepted these books. This is a reliable indicator of canonicity, regardless of the existence of tensions and diversity in the books chosen. It is important to show that this acceptance came at an early stage, and Kruger gives an excellent display of the evidence, paying especial attention to the development of collections of MSS and how they were used.

This is a comprehensive and able contribution to the study of canonisation, giving lots of information and argumentation that cannot be found so easily elsewhere. What happens when Christian believers appraise it? Has Kruger expounded a case that stands up under the scrutiny of other Spirit-filled believers? There are several points of tension that have emerged and others can be added. In particular, there are questions regarding the way in which he tends to assume that statements of a self-authenticating nature apply to every word of canonical books and guarantee their inspiration; but this simply means that another book is needed to explore this area.

Similar problems arise, of course, with other aspects of theology. If I believe in the goodness of God, I have to deal with the apparent evidence of actions that may seem incompatible with it (such as the famous Lisbon Earthquake), and I can put myself in an impregnable position by saying that my critics lack the spiritual insight to recognise the hand of God for good in natural disasters. In his atheistic days Tony Flew used to pose the question to believers: what sort of thing would count as evidence that forces you to abandon theism? He found it frustrating that Christians could have a high pile of unanswered problems that they were prepared to put on one side while they continued believing. But of course if you have good reason for faith, you're not going to abandon it simply because of some difficulties; on balance you continue to believe. So too while this approach to canonicity is not problem-free, it clears up other difficulties that readers may have, and takes its place as essential reading on the topic.

*I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen*

*The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology.* Edited by Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-4094-3488-7. xviii + 352 pp. £85.00

In the summer of 2008, several scholars gathered at Westminster College, Cambridge, for the 'John Owen Today' conference. The papers that were presented at this conference by numerous theologians, pastors and

church historians formed the basis for *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*. The book is composed of seventeen chapters divided into three sections: method, theology, and practice. This volume is an enlightening, refreshing, and helpful book focused upon the life, thought, and legacy of John Owen.

The book opens with a preface by Carl Trueman that focuses on the significance of Owen and his thought. The first section of the book, on method, has contributions by Ryan Kelly, Sebastian Rehnman, John Tweeddale, Willem J. van Asselt, Gert van den Brink, and Crawford Gribben. All six of these chapters are of very high quality. Willem van Asselt's chapter on the covenant theology of Owen and Johannes Cocceius is particularly good, as is Sebastian Rehnman's chapter on Owen's understanding of faith and reason. One very interesting and enjoyable chapter was Crawford Gribben's essay on Edward Millington's *Bibliotheca Oweniana*, the auction catalogue made of Owen's library after his death.

The second section on Owen's theology has contributions by Kelly Kopic, Suzanne McDonald, Edwin Tay, Alan Spence, Robert Letham, and George Hunsinger. Suzanne McDonald's chapter on Owen's understanding of the beatific vision is excellent. McDonald notes that Owen reoriented the traditional doctrine of the beatific vision in a Christological direction. Edwin Tay's chapter on the oblation and intercession of Christ the high priest is significant in that it highlights a central theme of Owen's thought. The only chapter here that has problematic elements is Robert Letham's essay on Owen's doctrine of the Trinity. Letham fails to accurately assess Owen's subtle and nuanced doctrine of the *pactum salutis*, instead characterizing it as a binitarian conception that divides the Trinity. Letham also inaccurately states that Owen denied divine simplicity in his *Commentary on Hebrews*. Owen actually would have seen such a denial as Socinian, and the passages that Letham quotes are nearly identical to passages found in *Vindiciae Evangelicae*, where Owen strongly defends divine simplicity (pp. 193-4).

The third and final section on practise has contributions by Tim Cooper, John Coffey, Daniel Hyde, Lee Gatiss and Martin Foord. Tim Cooper has a very interesting chapter on Owen's personality. Daniel Hyde has a chapter on Owen's understanding of prayer and the work of the Spirit. Lee Gatiss examines Owen's thought on infant baptism and salvation. These chapters are very good, and for the most part straightforward. The book concludes with a very helpful bibliography that has been compiled by John W. Tweeddale. The bibliography is a valuable resource for Owen scholars, theologians, historians, and pastors.

*The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology* is very well written, and very well put together. It is not unnecessarily compli-

cated, and the editors have done a fine job at avoiding tedium. One of the strengths of this book is that there are numerous essays that examine theological topics and issues that were very important to Owen. This book is thus highly valuable because Owen's concerns are valuable. Owen's priorities of communion with the Triune God, mortification of sin, and the priesthood of Christ, to name a few, are essential concerns for the church in any age. The church in our era will be enriched and strengthened by a consistent commitment to those same priorities that were so important to Owen.

*Christopher Cleveland, Florida, USA*

*The Theology of Jonathan Edwards.* By Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-19-979160-6. xii + 757 pp. £40.00.

2012 saw the publication of two massive volumes that cover, in encyclopaedic fashion, the theology of the Puritan tradition. One of these was Joel Beeke and Mark Jones's *A Puritan Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), which summarises the output of the scores of Puritans who were active between the 1560s and the 1660s. The book reviewed here, which is nearly as large, deals with but one of their successors in the following century: Jonathan Edwards (1703-58).

*The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* is a testament to the diligent labours of two leading Edwards scholars, Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott. Both men are able historical theologians, and have complementary strengths in the allied disciplines such as cultural history and philosophy of religion. Of particular interest to *SBET* readers, both are also Reformed evangelicals who are almost entirely sympathetic to Edwards. Indeed, it is wonderful to see what scholarship from a shared perspective can do for the subject. Those who have endured the sometimes hopelessly maladroit interpretations of non-evangelical academics would understand the relief of reading something recognisable as Edwards on these topics. Indeed, if one takes the example of Perry Miller, it would seem that the further away the personal theological perspective, the less accurate even a very informed interpretation of Edwards seems to be. This book will be a landmark in Edwards studies for its combination of rigorous scholarship and sympathetic rendering. Although evangelicals have been active in the field from the start, McClymond and McDermott represent a changing of the guard in which evangelicals appear to have gained the ascendancy.

The book has forty five chapters and is divided into three parts. The first part provides a very helpful introduction to Edwards' historical situ-

ation as well as constructing a memorable framework for understanding his work: that of a symphony. The authors remind us that, in navigating this voluminous corpus, it is possible to focus on the ‘music’ of one individual part to the neglect of the others. The framework encourages us to keep in mind that Edwards’ thought is a cohesive whole, echoing the words and works of a harmonious Triune God.

The heart of the book is the large second part dealing with 31 topics in Edwards’ theology, covering all the usual loci of theology plus many other distinctively Edwardsean themes such as beauty, typology and revival. Although pitched at a level that is not beyond the newcomer, scholars will find much to learn here in terms of significant primary material which has rarely seen the light of day and historical influences which have often gone without sufficient notice. As for secondary scholarship, McClymond and McDermott wisely adopt an approach of judicious appreciation—even those whose work they might have critiqued elsewhere often find some positive appropriation in this massive volume. This approach will likely be rewarded with widespread acceptance.

Similarly, the authors show an admirable restraint relating to their own distinctive agendas. The only major exception is their take on Edwards’ theology concerning the ‘heathen’. McClymond and McDermott think that Edwards:

became preoccupied with non-Christian nations and cultures and their possible role within God’s redemptive plan. Hundreds of notebook entries discussed the theme. Edwards was increasingly convinced that true religion might be found outside of Western monotheistic cultures (ch. 36). Furthermore, he developed a plan for his *magnum opus*—the *History of the Work of Redemption*—that would trace out the historical purposes of God within all global cultures (chs. 10, 12). (p. 563)

There are two related elements in this line of argument. One is that Edwards ‘was increasingly convinced that true religion might be found outside of Western monotheistic cultures.’ Now if the sentence said only that Edwards was convinced *religious truth* might be found in the various world religions, no one would argue; the authors convincingly describe how Edwards thought that God was preparing the world for the gospel by enabling certain aspects of the truth to be embedded into heathen traditions. However, to use instead the words ‘*true religion*’—a term that Edwards reserved for biblical Christianity—could easily be misinterpreted.

The other part of the argument is a demonstration of how God was working in world religions would have been a defining feature of the



planned History of the Work of Redemption project. The authors point out that Edwards does not mention this particular subject in the only comprehensive description we have of the project, the one found in his letter to the Princeton trustees, remarking: ‘One is struck by the differences between the description of the “great work” in the letter to the trustees and what may be inferred from both the redemption notebook and the later *Miscellanies*’ (p. 189). In other words, this disparity could be explained in terms that Edwards purposefully concealed this part of his project from his future employers. (cf. p. 186) Or, this disparity could be explained that, although Edwards clearly intended for world religions to play a part in his universal account, it did not loom large enough in his own mind to warrant special mention in the letter. It would seem difficult to prove conclusively which of these is the case, and the authors rightly distinguish between the objective data and their interpretation of it.

Such issues constitute a tiny fraction of the book, however. Those who know and like Edwards will be reminded of why they are attracted to his writings—the brilliant mind, the warm evangelical heart, the heavenly-mindedness, the grand scope of his kingdom ambitions, all coinciding in one who whose intentions were deeply orthodox. Early on, we are reminded of Edwards’ stand for the truth even when he was a graduating student at Yale:

One year before, the rector of Yale had closed commencement with words from the Book of Common Prayer, signalling that the leadership of Yale had passed to what Edwards and Reformed orthodoxy believed was crypto-Catholic Arminian heresy. Edwards’s *Quaestio* (academic disputation) on justification by faith was intended to move Yale back toward Reformation truths. (p. 26)

Were that the young seminarians of today as discerning and courageous. In addition to the larger themes, useful little gems from Edwards’ corpus abound, such as ‘Edwards stated sweepingly that “every true Christian has the spirit of a martyr”’ (p. 231). The book is thus of great help to pastors, both in the sense of personal devotional content and also in terms of direct appropriation for preaching.

Beyond a helpful consolidation of what we might have already known, there is little doubt that even the most serious of Edwards hobbyists will learn something new in the course of this book. One potential example would be Edwards’ nuanced view regarding the Covenant of Redemption, which involved the full consent of all three persons yet was only a covenant proper between the Father and the Son: ‘redemption was “determined by the perfect *consent of all*, and... *consultation among the three*

persons about it... there was a joint *agreement of all*, but not properly a covenant between 'em all'" (p. 199).

Readers of Edwards find that their attention is often drawn towards some parts of the 'symphony' more than others. Thus, much of the learning experience has to do with the encyclopaedic nature of the book wherein every topic is dealt with in turn. However, it is also this aspect that ends up exposing some of Edwards' flaws, notwithstanding the author's very sympathetic approach. For instance, I was forced to reckon with just how mistaken Edwards' abstracted account of ethics was in *The Nature of True Virtue*:

In a work that never quotes the Bible and was plainly intended to appeal to those who did not share his theological vision, Edwards explained that all human beings share certain moral goals.... Edwards ... spoke of consent to universal being, a notion that does not necessarily imply the existence of God. (pp. 514-15)

Unsurprisingly, as McClymond and McDermott report, most Reformed theologians have rejected this account. If so much of Calvin's lasting worth is to be found in his uniform regularity and reliability, the picture is Edwards is more variegated. There are many instances of great brilliance, rising far above the ordinary treatments, but there are also some irregularities. These later are related to a penchant for 'speculating on deep and perhaps unanswerable questions' that the authors rightly identify (pp. 355-6). Nonetheless, such blemishes are there to remind us that the best of men have feet of clay and that our dependence should be on Christ alone.

In summary, this is a very impressive book on the theology of one of the greatest minds ever given to God's church. Those with an interest in Edwards certainly must get a copy. Ministers or serious-minded Christians would also be well served by having this excellent volume.

*William M. Schweitzer, Gateshead Presbyterian Church*

*Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.* By Steven M. Stuebaker. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-59333-846-6. xi + 301 pp. £92.00.

Stuebaker's monograph is the first to focus solely on Jonathan Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity, and critically engages contemporary perspectives concerning the categorization of Edwards' view. Against various interpretations, Stuebaker argues that Edwards appropriates an Augustinian view of the Trinity, with specific emphasis on the 'mutual love' image in

Augustine's *De Trinitate*. Studebaker argues that the prevailing mistake in contemporary literature has been the adoption of a faulty historical paradigm. This paradigm, what he deems the 'threeness-oneness paradigm', forces a cleavage in the tradition between Western trinitarian formulation, which gives primacy to the oneness of God, and the Eastern depiction, which privileges the threeness of God. By imposing this threeness-oneness paradigm on Edwards' analysis of the Trinity, scholarship has read Edwards' social imagery against his more classic trinitarian formulation.

Studebaker's work takes on a broad twofold structure. First, it is a mapping of contemporary scholarship on Edwards' trinitarian thought and provide an alternative portrayal. In criticizing the use of a threeness-oneness paradigm, Studebaker focuses his attention on Amy Plantinga Pauw's work on Edwards' doctrine, arguing that her method, which he understands as the archetypal example of the threeness-oneness paradigm, advances an overgeneralization of the tradition and a misguided hermeneutical principle. Second, Studebaker's work is a constructive proposal arguing for a continuity between Edwards' trinitarian thought and Augustine's. In order to develop this line, Studebaker extracts what he believes are the five 'central characteristics' of the Augustine mutual love tradition. In short, Studebaker's ground-clearing efforts unravel the bulk of the secondarily literature, showing, in my mind definitively, that the bifurcation of Edwards' view into psychological and social analogies fails to do justice to Edwards' position. Furthermore, Studebaker questions the value of the threeness-oneness paradigm both as an historical model and as a hermeneutical principle. On the other hand, Studebaker's constructive task fails at several points, both in giving an accurate depiction of Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity as well as providing a helpful corrective to the misguided categorizations in the secondary literature.

With respect to the last point, it is unclear to this reader that Studebaker's five characteristics provide necessary and sufficient conditions for a *helpful* categorization. As Amy Plantinga Pauw points out, Edwards directly contradicts an explicit statement concerning the nature of the divine persons in his development of the 'mutual love model', and yet this is not problematic on Studebaker's view. Instead of engaging specifically with criticism from Edwards scholars that his view is 'not that Augustinian', Studebaker simply condemns methodologies and reemphasizes his five characteristics of a mutual love model. It is not clear that these characteristics do justice to Augustine, the tradition or Edwards' own trinitarian model. Furthermore, by developing a series of principles abstracted from their theological and historical contexts, Studebaker simply develops a new kind of paradigm from which to read Edwards' trinitarian thought.

In other words, by attempting to read the tradition according to a five-point lowest common denomination, Stuebaker's analysis ignores the theological orientation, polemics and key idiosyncratic features of historic presentations broadly and Edwards' work specifically. This does not mean that Stuebaker's analysis is wrong – Edwards can be understood to be Augustinian in a broad sense – only that a delineation so broad fails to be meaningful. Despite these drawbacks, Stuebaker's volume is an important resource in a growing discussion on the nature of Edwards' trinitarian theology.

*Kyle Strobel, Grand Canyon University, AZ, USA*

*Baptism: Three Views.* Edited by David F. Wright. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3856-1. 200 pp. £9.99.

Much of David Wright's research and writings focused on Christian baptism and the accompanying theological issues because he believed that the increasingly pluralistic and post-Christian ethos of western societies demanded an apologia of the Christian claim of 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism' (Eph. 4:5).

Because of Wright's death in February 2008, Daniel Reid, the InterVarsity Press editor, authors the introduction. He notes that the book intends to be 'a thoughtful reconsideration of the meaning of this "one baptism" that we profess as Christians in the midst of increasingly non-Christian Western societies.' Reid rightfully prompts the reader to consider that 'one's view of baptism is bound up with other theological and hermeneutical considerations' and implores the reader to pay particular attention to how the contributors handle these nuances (p. 14).

Bruce Ware, representing the believer's baptism view, begins with a stinging rebuke of paedobaptists, asserting that 'large portions of the church are living in disobedience to Christ' (p. 20) for their failure to affirm believer's baptism in accordance with Jesus' command in the Matthean Great Commission. His defence of credobaptism attempts to marshal the New Testament evidence to define the subjects and mode of Christian baptism in light of the etymology of *baptizō*, concluding that only believers in Christ are to be immersed in water. Although his main argument emphasizes the discontinuity between the Testaments, specifically between circumcision and baptism, Ware does observe a similarity between paedobaptists and credobaptists in the affirmation of baptism as a 'sign and seal of the new covenant' (p. 41). His observation, though, is theologically thin and begs to be developed from a Baptist perspective. In the end, he commends credobaptism for its vivid picture of being buried with Christ and as the basis for a regenerate church membership.

Sinclair Ferguson, representing the infant baptism view, strikes an irenic tone by noting that ‘we are all baptists’ since ‘paedobaptists baptize *believers* and their children, including infants’ (p. 78). He frames his advocacy for paedobaptism within a covenantal and redemptive-historical understanding of the gospel whereby the triune God promises and provides for the salvation of his people, which is ‘signified and sealed by physical symbols’ (p. 96). Baptism does not function *ex opera operato* nor is it merely a *signum nudum*. Rather, it ‘signifies and seals the work of Christ, crucified and resurrected, and the communion with God which is ours through faith’ (p. 100). Although Ferguson meagerly addresses the discontinuity, his argument rests on the continuity between the Testaments and God’s covenantal promises to his people and their children, including infants. Thus, infant baptism, set within the context of the family of God, accentuates the gospel’s call to a life of continuous conversion through repentance and faith, rather than reducing conversion merely to a single moment.

Anthony Lane, representing the dual-practice baptism view, deduces a four-fold pattern from the apostolic preaching in Acts, namely repentance, faith, baptism, and reception of the Holy Spirit. This pattern uniquely ties baptism to conversion. What, though, of the children and infants of these new converts? Lane remarks: ‘Unfortunately neither Luke nor any other New Testament writer gives an unequivocal, explicit answer’ to the question of what happened to the children of believing parents (p. 143). Yet, because of the unity of baptism and faith, baptism of children must be an adaptation of adult believer’s baptism. To address the ambiguity, Lane employs a ‘seismological approach’ that examines the ‘effects [within the early church] two to three hundred years later’ (p. 144). He concludes, without offering a doctrinal basis, that there is no evidence to object ‘*in principle* to either the baptism or nonbaptism of babies’ thereby allowing for a diversity of viewpoints, which enriches and balances the communal life of the church (p. 163).

This book does little to achieve its stated purpose to reconsider thoughtfully the meaning of ‘one baptism’ or Wright’s hope, for that matter, to elevate the discussion. The respondent and rebuttal essays only seem to solidify common dividing lines (though this will be useful for those looking to understand the different perspectives). This book would have benefited from an insightful postscript or conclusion that traces the contours of the pertinent theological and hermeneutical issues raised by the various participants, charting a path forward that gestures toward ‘one faith, one Lord, one baptism’ without glossing over distinctions.

*Stephen M. Garrett, International Institute for Christian Studies*

*The Portal of Beauty: Towards a Theology of Aesthetics.* By Bruno Forte.  
Translated by David Glenday and Paul McPartlan. Grand Rapids, MI:  
Eerdmans, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8028-3280-1. 129 pp. £16.99.

Peering through the looking glass of Bruno Forte's, *The Portal of Beauty*, a rich theological account of beauty emerges where 'the crucified God is the form and splendor of eternity in time' thereby contributing to a fuller theological 'rereading of the beauty that happens in music, cinema, and poetry' (p. viii). Forte develops this counterintuitive and controversial thesis by tracing the contours of a theology of beauty in the thought of Augustine, Aquinas, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Balthasar, and Evdokimov, making a seminal theological contribution to the burgeoning conversation between theology and the arts.

Forte offers a succinct account of Augustine's understanding of beauty, highlighting its intrinsic, objective nature as mere fragments reflecting the wholeness and unity found in the triune God. Such notions of beauty should point us toward the perfect beauty of the eternal Godhead. Yet wherefore art thou beauty in the disorder of suffering, particularly Christ's death? Forte concludes that Augustine's neglect to address such antinomies urges us to consider other paths toward a theology of beauty.

Along these pathways, Forte introduces readers first to Aquinas who renders beauty christologically in the splendour of form. Such splendour, such transcendence, takes us to the dark limits of our human finitude, propelling us along Kierkegaard's dialectical journey through the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages of life. Here, beauty compels us to move beyond our illusory imaginings, according to Forte, to an encounter with the Eternal One. Such 'beauty will save the world', yet only if this beauty accounts for the world's suffering rather than avoiding it through some ethereal escapism (p. 43). In Forte's opinion, Dostoevsky accounts for such suffering in his depiction of God's beauty as that which inhabits its opposite since Christ takes on death and rises in glorious victory, giving beauty an eschatological quality.

Balthasar's emphasis on God's glory, says Forte, highlights this eschatological quality as God reveals and conceals his beauty in 'the tragic character of the *mysterium paschale*' of Christ's death and descent—the 'event of absolutely free and unpredictable self-giving of the divine Whole in the fragment' (pp. 53-4). Forte further contends that Evdokimov amplifies God's glory with his 'Trinitarian "metaphysics" of light' such that God's glorious light finds expression in and through the icon (p. 68).

Forte applies aspects of this theological trajectory to describe and ascertain beauty's presence in music, the cinema, and poetry. Can music, cinema, and poetry mediate the divine? Forte believes so, since there is

an analogical relationship ‘between the unforeseeable and unpredictable action of the Spirit... and the docile response to him of a believing heart’ (p. 99). Beauty in music and poetry materializes, then, ‘by way of interruption, negation, surprise, silence, no less than of harmony, measure, and relationship’ (p. 100) while the cinema opens the viewer to ‘the Transcendent’ through a ‘narrative structure’ found in the icon and the story—the symbolic and the narrative (p. 112).

Forte rightly identifies the key theological concept that contributes to a thicker understanding of our experience of beauty, namely God’s beauty. His understanding of the Spirit as ‘the enduring openness and outgoingness of the Silence of the Father and of the Word’ is an intriguing notion for how God communicates his unspeakable beauty to the world. What is missing, though, is a clear articulation of God’s beauty that weaves together the various threads Forte identifies in the Christian tradition. This omission becomes apparent in Forte’s chapter on ‘Cinema and the Sacred’ when his focus turns to the doctrine of analogy, the icon, and story to illumine the thorny topic of God’s incommensurability rather than how God’s beauty contributes to the possibility of ‘sacred’ cinema. Perhaps, if Forte were to bring these threads together, the *dramatic* nature of God’s beauty might be more apparent, intimating at how we might reread our experience of beauty in the cinema in light of God’s dramatic beauty.

*The Portal of Beauty* is particularly important for newcomers to the theology/arts discussion as it cogently introduces important theological issues through an adept articulation of the Christian tradition. Veterans will find Forte’s theological nuances insightful while they pine for further explanation. His trinitarian account of God’s beauty is laudable and rich. Forte’s work should gain wide acceptance as a ‘portal of beauty’ into the discipline of theological aesthetics.

Stephen M. Garrett, *International Institute for Christian Studies*

*Nouvelle Théologie—New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II.* By Jürgen Mettepenningen. London: T & T Clark, 2010. ISBN 978-0-567-03410-6. xv + 218 pp. £19.99.

Jürgen Mettepenningen, research fellow at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, presents in this book a historical-theological discussion of *nouvelle théologie*. The movement of *nouvelle théologie* is well-known in Catholic circles, since it is this group of theologians who made waves in the Catholic world between the late 1930s and the Second Vatican Council (1962-5). In fact, as Mettepenningen rightly points out, the reforms of Vatican II would have been unthinkable without the movement of *nou-*

*velle théologie*. We might want to add that Catholic-Protestant dialogue, too, would have been unthinkable without this movement. Mettepenningen's book is written in obvious sympathy with the *nouvelle* theologians. This sympathy also entails strong disagreement with the scholastic neo-Thomism that dominated Catholic theology especially since the late 1960s. In the Catholic world of today, such hegemony of neo-Thomism is almost unthinkable, and Mettepenningen's book is an illustration of this. When opponents are no longer there to be feared, it of course becomes easier to distance oneself from them. At times, one wishes that Mettepenningen would be a bit more cautious and objective in his descriptions of neo-Thomism and of the politics of Rome that went along with it. That said, he is certainly right to insist that *nouvelle théologie* should be seen as a reaction against the neo-scholastic establishment of the time.

Mettepenningen begins his book in Part I with a broad description of the theological background of *nouvelle théologie* (including discussions of the Tübingen School, of John Henry Newman, and of the Modernist Crisis), and with an overview of the various phases of *nouvelle théologie's* historical development. This is followed in Part II with a more detailed analysis of the various theologians and their writings. Here Mettepenningen focuses, in turn, on the Dominicans of Le Saulchoir and Louvain (Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Henri-Marie Féret, Louis Charlier, and René Draguet), the Jesuits of Fourvière (Henri Bouillard, Jean Daniélou, and Henri de Lubac), and the Dutch theologians Edward Schillebeeckx and Piet Schoonenberg.

The book's main argument—that *nouvelle théologie* should be seen as a hinge between the Modernist movement of the early twentieth century and the Second Vatican Council—is a controversial one, and in the end I am not persuaded by it. I am also less than convinced that we should include the Dutch theologians Schillebeeckx and Schoonenberg within the movement of *nouvelle théologie*. Mettepenningen is right, however, to highlight some of *nouvelle théologie's* emphases, such as the significance of history, the link between experience and theology, and a retrieval of patristic and medieval sources. The greatest strength of this book is the erudite engagement with historical sources, and it gives a helpful overview of the various figures and controversies surrounding *nouvelle théologie*.

*Hans Boersma, Regent College, BC, Canada*



*Embracing Truth: Homosexuality and the Word of God.* Edited by David W. Torrance and Jock Stein. Haddington: Handsel Press, 2012. ISBN 978-1-871828-74-0. 252 pp. £6.95.

It is a long time since such a comprehensive, scholarly—yet readable—book has been published which unashamedly states faithfully and compassionately the biblical ('traditional') view on the vexed issue of homosexuality which is disturbing and dividing the church of God in our generation. In the present reviewer's opinion, this is a major work which deserves the widest possible readership on both sides of the theological divide.

The book is a symposium with thirteen contributors; the editors each contribute chapters, David Torrance three and Jock Stein one. There are four main sections. The first is entitled, 'Clearing the ground' with studies by Andrew Goddard, Stanton L. Jones and David Randall. Dr Goddard reviews the immense changes of the past forty years and handles skillfully nine contemporary objections to the traditional view: they are objections arising from biblical interpretation, science and reason and contemporary culture. Jones is no less thorough in his examination of the case the social sciences seek to make to settle the moral status of homosexuality; his treatment is honest and humble. Randall gives us a survey of 'Facts and Figures'. His chapter makes for extremely disturbing reading as he lays out the incontrovertible facts regarding the (lack of) stability in civil partnerships (compared to contemporary traditional marriage partnerships), and the (lack of) duration in a high percentage of homosexual relationships. Randall's concerns for the future and his conclusions are alarming. There are four appendices to his chapter which, even if taken alone, fully justify the book's title, *Embracing Truth*. The medical and physical consequences of homosexual practice are one of the best kept secrets of contemporary culture, from governmental level right down to pre-school nurseries.

The second section, 'Christian belief', is equally well done. David Torrance's three chapters on scriptural authority, marriage, and theological pointers concerning homosexuality deserve careful reading. I found his handling of the vexed question, 'Is the Bible the Word of God or does it only contain the Word of God', quite superb though his preamble to that theme would, I felt, lose many readers in its very philosophical approach. Tom Smail deals with the topic of sex per se and the Bible's affirmation of it; as one would expect from him, Smail's treatment is logical, biblical and gracious. (Sadly, Tom died three months before *Embracing Truth* was published.) Angus Morrison's paper on the Church's traditional view is

an extremely fine piece of work. In my view it could be published as a separate pamphlet.

The book's third section is on 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice' and mainly consists in writings by Robert Gagnon. First, Paul Burgess gives the reader an extended review of Gagnon's major work, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002). The other two chapters are by Gagnon. One would have to search long and hard to find such a scholarly and comprehensive treatment of this theme. Gagnon takes in the hot issue of 'Accommodation and pastoral concern: what does the Bible say?' as well as dealing faithfully with the question, 'How seriously does Scripture treat the issue of homosexual practice?' Included are three pages of a select bibliography.

The book's final section, 'Wisdom and obedience', explores the painful path for homosexuals of celibacy (Calum MacKellar), matters of the heart (Mark S. Koonz on James E. Loder), a pastoral defense of marriage (Philip Tartaglia) and 'compassion and community' (Jock Stein). MacKellar's honesty is very moving. I found the final two pages of his chapter deeply thought-provoking as he uses biblical marriage as an analogy of Christ's union with the church; his handling of it directed me to new ground. Loder's experience of counselling provides material that is wise, enlightening and authoritative. The same must said of Tartaglia's defence of marriage. Jock Stein's final chapter does not always make for comfortable reading. Jock challenges the reader—and indeed the whole Christian Church—to handle the issues raised by the book with honesty and realism, as well as faithfully; it is a fine piece of writing and, one supposes, about the only way to gather together the mass of material that has been covered in nearly 250 pages.

Gaelic speakers will no doubt be able to pronounce with ease the name of the writer of the book's epilogue: Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh. Fearghas 'draws a line in the sand' using as his 'speleological guide' the Dutch philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd. As I read this essay I wondered how ever the liberals and revisionists would answer it with their inevitable counter-arguments. And indeed that applies to the whole of *Embracing Truth*. It is a most formidable, robust and challenging publication. The charge so often leveled at traditionalists is that our views are mere knee-jerk reactions. We await to see how knee-jerk the responses will be that seek to dismiss the meticulous, scholarly material that has been gathered into this volume which urges Christians across the world to 'embrace truth'.

Those commending the book on its back cover include Kenny Borthwick, R.T. Kendal, Ann Allen, Michael Green and Kevin Vanhoozer. The last of these writes: 'This bracing collection of interdisciplinary essays encourages the church to stand fast against the prevailing socio-cultural

winds and offers helpful directions for navigating its course with a canonical compass oriented to the church's north star, Jesus Christ.'

*David C. Searle, Arbroath*

*The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness.* By Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4335-3334-1. 160 pp. £11.99.

Whatever may be said about this particular book, a cursory glance at the Christian church alerts us to the solemn fact that the subject of holiness, or rather the lack of it, is one of urgent concern. Of the many words used, even in church circles, to describe Christian character and conduct, the word 'holy' seldom appears.

Kevin DeYoung's book goes a long part of the way to address the issue. Not only is there an alarming lack of holiness, but there is even an apparent lack of interest in it. DeYoung confronts the rigid legalism which purports to be a close adherence to God, but which is seemingly hard and lacking in love and compassion, such as Jesus showed. On the other hand, there is a liberalism, which thinks it is the freedom of grace, but is only antinomianism with a twist to appear as being evangelical. The author traces the root of the innate human problem when he writes that we are not born with a natural concern for holiness. 'You didn't grow up with a concern for holiness... The hole in our holiness is that we don't really care much about it'. From this, DeYoung rightly asserts that the beginning and pursuit of holiness is essentially a work of God for, and in us. The seriously compromised state of morals and social conduct in the Christian church is shameful. Especially so when people who profess to be Christians ridicule holiness, and reject biblical truths which challenge them to a greater and purer commitment to Christ. It is this failure that has led to so much collapse into the acceptance of behaviour and relationships which are clearly condemned by the God of truth who calls us to be holy people. In this volume, DeYoung cites, in support of his contention, many other writers, including Puritans who viewed holiness as Christians 'becoming visible saints' (p. 13). The book is replete with quotes worth retelling. Let me mention one from J. I. Packer, that both challenges and encourages. 'In reality, holiness is the goal of our redemption' (p. 24).

The chapter on 'Saints and Sexual Immorality' would be profitable reading for all Christians, but especially for young Christians exploring relationships, as they grow up in a society obsessed with sexual issues. I wish that I had read this book over fifty years ago, but it was not written then!

The thrust of this highly recommended book is a call back to the Christianity of the Bible, to the call of Jesus on our lives that we deny ourselves and follow him. It is a reminder that to profess the name of Jesus is to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly and righteously in this world. As Jerry Bridges is quoted as saying, 'God has made it possible for us to walk in holiness. But he has given us the responsibility of doing the walking' (p. 89).

*Malcolm MacInnes, Inverness*

*John Calvin: Reformer for the 21st Century.* By William Stacy Johnson. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. ISBN 9780664234089. ix + 142 pp. £10.99.

This is one of the multitude of volumes which followed the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin in 2009. The author is an Associate Professor at Princeton but this book is intended for the general reader, at the popular end of the market. It is extremely readable and engaging and contains a great deal of helpful information.

Without any 'heavy' structure, the author takes us through the main themes of Calvin's writing. After a chapter on his life and influence, he covers the great themes of salvation: 'Grace Alone, Christ Alone, Faith Alone.' Thereafter we have chapters on Scripture, election, sin & salvation, the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, and law and gospel. The author then turns to wider themes, including the church, worship, the sacraments and also political and socio-economic issues. The final chapter reminds us that we should be 'always reforming.'

The problem for this reviewer is that the author effectively undermines Calvin's position at every turn. Having (in most cases) clearly and honestly presented Calvin's view, he almost always goes on to say something like, 'Today few of us would agree with Calvin...', or Calvin's view 'is difficult for most 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians to accept'. He further compounds the move away from Calvin when, in the chapter on the Holy Spirit, he suggests that instead of rediscovering the doctrinal tenets of the great Genevan Reformer, the use of 'sanctified imagination' is the way forward, and that the church should devote its energy towards such 'reimagining'.

To have such a readable book, with so much helpful material and to end up being disappointed, is a pity but sadly it is not uncommon today for those in the broadly Reformed tradition to pay homage to Calvin while actually denying the substantial content of his main doctrinal themes. Given the number of fine books to have come out of the 2009 anniversary, this is one I would pass over.

*A.T.B. McGowan, University of the Highlands and Islands*

*Every Good Endeavour: Connecting Your Work to God's Plan for the World.*

By Timothy Keller and Katharine Leary Alsdorf. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012. ISBN 978-1-444-70259-0. 287 pp. £12.99.

The purpose of this book is stated in its epilogue: it is the theological rationale behind Keller's Redeemer Church Center for Faith and Work (<http://www.faithandwork.org/>).

The book is helpfully divided into three parts: (i) God's original vision for human work, (ii) the reality of what sin has done to human work, and (iii) what believing and living the gospel can do to enhance work for God's glory. While the first two parts are revisiting the same themes as most theologies of works, the third part is much more enthralling to the seasoned theologian of work. This latter part tries to introduce how everyday work can be used of the triune God for his purposes, interspersed with many helpful anecdotes and examples.

Initially, the authors set the scene by using J. R. R. Tolkien's short paper 'Leaf by Niggle'. This scene-setting is eschatological in focus. Oddly, after this intriguing introduction the authors do not flesh out any eschatological vision or relate their views on work back to it, making the reader wonder why they began with it. Indeed, this book is lacking an eschatological vision for work despite this promising beginning. It appears to have just been a fleeting flirtation with an idea for the authors. Yet without an eschatological bent Keller and Alsdorf never fully address why developing human culture is deserving of our effort and is of any eternal worth to God.

Another initial criticism is aimed at several instances of loose language, for example, 'All work has dignity because it reflects God's image in us' (p. 51). It would not take much arguing to show the authors that terrorist endeavours, sex trafficking, or bank robberies fail to reveal any dignity or demonstration of God's image. There were several loose overstatements of this sort at different stages in the argument.

Nevertheless, this book reminds me of the richness of puritan Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory*, who with great diligence sought to help his fellow disciples authentically live out the gospel. There is a very healthy attention given to biblical analysis and the adoption of a typically American historical/grammatical commitment to biblical hermeneutics throughout. This book is certainly a modern day equivalent of *A Christian Directory*, albeit lacking the sheer volume of Baxter's work.

Keller and Alsdorf claim this book is unique in its uniting four stands of work: (i) work guided by the biblical narrative, (ii) work that crucially stewards the earth responsibly, (iii) work that is ethically guided by the gospel, and (iv) work that is motivated by the inner power of the gospel.

Taking note of the bibliography, it is curious that they should claim this uniqueness, as fellow American evangelical, Darrell Cosden, has already fulfilled such interweaving components in his vision for faith and work in his *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006). Given how widely Keller and Alsdorf have read, this is a significant omission from their thinking and awareness.

Nevertheless, the authors' breadth of learning is unquestionably impressive as they closely rely upon Reformer Martin Luther, Anglo-Catholic Dorothy Sayers, Calvinist Lee Hardy, Evangelical Derek Kidner, and Roman Catholics Robert Bellah and Josef Pieper. This demonstrates how influenced the authors are by the broadness of Christian theology. This exudes a great strength of this book.

Another asset of this book is its account of common grace. Keller and Alsdorf give a careful analysis of how God uses those who do not belong to the Church in the development of a better world. They write, 'Because Christians are never as good as their beliefs should make them and non-Christians are never as bad as their wrong beliefs should make them, we will adopt a stance of critical enjoyment of human culture and its expressions in every field of work' (p. 197). Reflections upon this topic are nuanced and very insightful.

The nagging question, however, that I am left with after considering this book is, 'why write this book, what does it offer that has not already been written before by say, Leland Ryken?' Honestly, I do not know. The authors are restating that which has already been set forth many times before. Having said this, what they do offer, by way of Keller's popularity, is a vast readership. This will be the factor that this well written book thrives on. For the instilling of a vision of a robust theology of work to a large number of people is never a waste of time.

*Stuart C. Weir, International Christian College, Glasgow*

*Christ the Key.* By Kathryn Tanner. Current Issues in Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0521732772. xxii + 309 pp. £18.99.

Kathryn Tanner's thesis in *Christ the Key* is quite simple—Christ is the key to understanding every doctrine—and the contents of the book follow her application of this approach to the doctrines of human nature (ch. 1), grace (chs. 2-3), trinitarian life (ch. 4), politics (ch. 5), death and sacrifice (ch. 6), and the working of the Spirit (ch. 7). Although the Yale professor upholds the traditional protestant approach of the centrality of Christ, she does so within a framework that emphasizes the goal of the Christian life as participation with God and the means for this as Christ's

incarnation (referring not merely to his birth, but to the union of divinity and humanity in himself).

In chapter one, Tanner gives a Christological interpretation of the *imago dei*, claiming that it is Jesus, rather than human nature, that is the image of God. Humans can only image God by being attached to the incarnate Christ who is both the model and the means for our participating in and becoming the image of God. Since the way one defines the problem will determine the nature of the solution, chapters two and three are crucial to Tanner's entire system because they explain the need, and therefore nature, of grace. 'Human beings need grace to become images of God, not because they are sunk in sin but because they cannot be images of any strong sort simply in virtue of what they are' (p. 59). This 'grace completing nature' schema, which views grace not as a response to sin but as the fulfillment of nature, becomes dominant for Tanner and goes hand in hand with her emphasis on the incarnation. Tanner does, however, acknowledge the potential for downplaying the seriousness of sin and therefore attempts to subsume a western emphasis on sin within her system.

Chapter four demonstrates that Jesus' life is the key to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, focusing on the irreducible roles of the trinitarian persons as a way of upholding emphases from the East and West. Jesus' trinitarian way of life provides a model for humans who are united to the Son by the Spirit in order to live a life of ascent (worship) and descent (service). If Jesus is our model for relating with the triune God, then chapter five shows that Jesus (not the Trinity) is also our model for ethics and politics. Tanner argues strongly against certain forms of social trinitarianism, claiming that people are not called to imitate the Trinity, but rather to participate in it through Christ's incarnation. In chapter six Tanner presents an 'incarnational view of the atonement' (p. 262) that takes a radical departure from traditional descriptions of the cross in an attempt to do justice to the criticisms of feminist and womanist theologians. Tanner rejects any forensic or propitiatory understanding of the cross, redefines sacrifice in terms of communal harmony, and argues for the incarnation as 'the primary mechanism of atonement' (p. 252). In the final chapter Tanner builds on her non-competitive account of divine human relations by arguing that the Spirit works primarily in a natural and gradual way through human fallibility rather than an immediate and miraculous way that leads to infallible certainty.

Tanner's book is provocative, creative, and certainly meets Cambridge's series aim of 'questioning existing paradigms or rethinking perspectives' and 'providing original insights.' Though Christ is certainly the key for Tanner, the door that she opens with this key leads far from the

traditions within which she writes. Whether others follow her down this hallway remains to be seen.

*Jeremy R. Treat, Wheaton College, IL, USA*

*The Life of God in the Soul of the Church: The Root and Fruit of Spiritual Fellowship.* By Thabiti Anyabwile. Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-84550-923-1. 243 pp. £8.99.

Thabiti Anyabwile is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Grand Cayman and *The Life of God in the Soul of the Church* is a lightly edited series of sermons preached to his congregation on the practical outworking of the doctrine of union with Christ in the context of church fellowship.

The sermons arose from Anyabwile's reading of Henry Scougal's influential little book *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. Scougal was writing in the seventeenth century to a friend, encouraging him to cultivate those virtues, of love, humility and purity which arise from inner spiritual experience rather than the outward adornment of religion. According to Scougal, true religion is 'The image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay it is a real participation of his nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endued with it, may be said to have Christ "dwelling in their souls," and "Christ formed within them".' (Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 1996). J. I. Packer in the introduction to this edition of Scougal's work regrets Scougal's failure to articulate how we appropriate this true religious experience through union with Christ.

Anyabwile identifies another weakness, namely the individualistic nature of the approach. This arises largely from the form of the book: Scougal is allowing us to listen in, as it were, as he counsels a friend. Anyabwile's desire is to do build on Scougal's work whilst addressing these two weaknesses.

*The Life of God in the Soul of the Church* thus represents a twenty-first century call to relational holiness. The book's thesis is that 'spiritual holiness is the life of God in the soul of man experienced personally by believing the truth and shared relationally in the church and leading to holiness' (p. 17). After two opening chapters laying the doctrinal foundations of union with Christ, the doctrine is then applied to various aspects of church life. These include mutual love, spiritual gifts, partnership in the gospel, restoration and encouragement, suffering, forgiveness, singing to one another, giving and acceptance.



The book succeeds admirably in achieving its goals. Union with Christ is not simply introduced as a theological concept only to be abandoned for more practical concerns. It is consistently demonstrated to be the principle from which our life together must flow. Thus the need to confront sin within the fellowship and restore the penitent sinner arises from our own experience of being confronted, corrected and restored by Christ. Again, suffering in the church and the wider world is something we are to be alive to rather than tune out and to recognise that it reflects the spiritual reality of union with Christ and with one another.

The book is marked by theological precision and eschews the easy pragmatism that often mars 'evangelical' preaching. The sermons serve as a model of the value of systematic theology in the service of preaching.

The sermons are vivid in style, full of memorable expressions. Speaking of those who come looking for seeker sensitive services at First Baptist, he writes, 'We don't need seeker friendly services as much as we need seeker-friendly lives' (p. 101). On the subject of singing to one another as well as to the Lord in corporate worship he writes, 'Too many Christians think the gathering of the church is basically a couple of hundred people having their personal quiet time in the same place.'

Of great value to the preacher-reader will be the evangelistic appeals which are made in the course of most of these sermons. These arise naturally from the text. For example he concludes the exposition on accepting one another by turning to the non-Christians in the congregation (he always assumes that there will be unconverted listeners present), and says, 'I wonder if you've thought about whether or not you've been accepted by God and what it means if you're not' (p. 213). He goes on to make an urgent evangelistic appeal based on the cross. The manner in which Anyabwile weaves evangelistic appeal into expository preaching will repay careful study.

One of the strongest chapters is that on forgiveness. This chapter is worth the price of the book in itself. Anyabwile carefully negotiates the complexities of forgiveness that arise when the offending party does not acknowledge wrong. This is no ivory tower theorising. This is theology in its working clothes.

The weakest chapter is probably that on fellowship and spiritual gifts where Anyabwile's continuationist position is not underpinned by the same Biblical rigour as is evidenced elsewhere. For example, not all will be persuaded by his assertion that New Testament prophecy was akin to modern preaching and was not authoritative in the way Old Testament prophecy was (p. 81).

The sermon format is helpful in grounding the teaching in the life of the church but the format also has its downside. For example, the chapter

on gospel partnership has six pages (pp. 100-5) devoted to lists of individuals and their work in First Baptist Church. This material is less engaging to the outsider and would have benefited from greater editing.

This is an excellent book from an excellent communicator which will inspire and challenge.

*Ivor MacDonald, Hope Church (Free Church of Scotland), Coatbridge*

*The Seed and the Soil: Engaging with the Word of God.* By Pauline Hoggarth. Carlisle: Global Christian Books, an imprint of Langham Creative Projects, 2011. ISBN 978-1-907713-09-5. 156 pp. £7.99.

This is an important book on the Bible. The author has had long experience with Scripture Union and the book is in a series which the Langham Partnership International has published for pastors, students and lay leaders in the Developing World. The author was born in South America and has worked in several countries in that part of the world.

Taking the parable of the Sower and the Seed, Hoggarth first of all examines the seed. She helpfully discusses the authority of the Scripture and its inspiration. A good section on hermeneutics follows this. There are eight principles for the interpretation of the Bible. The rest of the book explores Bible teaching and seeks to apply it to modern issues. This is done in the context of the various soils of the parable, I think it is a necessary and brave thing to do. It is important to remember this book is written for people who are beginning to engage in issues which confront the thoughtful Christian. The issues are war, the Bible's understanding of women, homosexuality, Islam, children and youth, the church and the word of God. At the end of this book there is a short appendix which gives a number of resources for those who wish to look up further material on these subjects.

The difficulty in reading this book is that in bravely tackling these difficult subjects the author leaves important and basic questions unanswered. For instance on women in the Bible, Hoggarth writes 'all opportunities for theological reflection and exploring the Christian faith must be available to women and men alike as both equally serve the purposes of God's kingdom in communicating his truth in action and word' (p. 74). She is obviously asserting the equality of women in ministry but entirely fails to mention the many verses where Paul spoke on the headship of the husband for this is the theological rock on which those who oppose the ministry of leadership of women over men is built. The pattern of relationships in homes should be reflected in the congregation and cannot be ignored.

We cannot escape making up our minds on the subject of homosexuality. The push for the rights of two people of the same sex to marry is taking place in all western countries. Hoggarth carefully looks at the relatively few Biblical passages where it is discussed. She takes the advice which is often given to a person of homosexual orientation and is a Christian believer which is that such a person should be celibate. Hoggarth agrees that for a few this is an option. But she believes it to be an inadequate response. It overlooks that humans are wired for relationships by God himself. And 'we cannot demand that people of homosexual orientation live lives of righteousness—if we are not prepared to offer them embrace rather than exclusion' (p. 81). She does not say that they should be welcomed into the life of a congregation but that is the consequence of her pastoral treatment of the subject. Then the hard questions need to be asked like, 'Are such persons available for ministry position?' 'What kind of welcome would it appear to be if it is hedged around with restrictions?' The subject is too big and too important to leave these practical questions in the air.

Nevertheless I am glad to commend a book which takes the Bible and seeks to engage with the world and its immense needs.

*John R. Reid, Bishop, Sydney, NSW, Australia*

*The Fire of the Word: Meeting God on Holy Ground.* By Chris Webb. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8308-3563-8. 197 pp. £10.99.

The author was a Buddhist and was given some words of Jesus to meditate upon and discovered the life-giving power of the Scriptures. The first five chapters made my heart and mind sing with joy as I read. The aim of the book is to open the eyes of the reader to the Bible as the place where we may meet the living God. Webb writes,

the inspiration of Scripture is something greater, some thing wholly other: a life and presence has breathed into Scripture, some power, some flash of divine fire... The Bible contains—or more accurately, fails to contain, to hold back—the divine Author himself. Here the voice of God is heard; but God not only speaks, he makes himself fully present—gentle as the still small whisper on the mountain, terrible as an army with banners—breaking through the pages into our hearts, our lives, our world. (p. 57)

The question which we ask as we read this is, 'How can we find the divine fire in the Scriptures?' Webb says we must come to the Bible as lovers. He draws frequently on the Song of Solomon to teach us what a lover does. The Bible is the 'space where the image and likeness of God can be found,

experienced and encountered. When we open the Bible, it does not say to us, "Listen; God is there!" Instead, the voice of the Spirit whispers through each line, "Look: I am here!" (p. 61).

The following eight chapters are intended to show a long tradition of how people have found the Bible a book of divine power. He draws on that form of spirituality which arose out of the Counter Reformation commencing in the sixteenth century. Webb makes it clear that all forms of prayer are to be evaluated by the Bible. But there are some surprises. While discussing the Exercises of Ignatius Loyola he writes, 'many Jesuit centers offer directors who would be willing to guide you through these Exercises; I can testify from my own experience to their life-transforming effect' (p. 121). I know that a Jesuit would affirm faith, grace and the centrality of Christ, but a Jesuit worth his salt would not affirm that the spirituality we seek is by faith alone, by grace alone, and by Christ alone. These are at the heart of evangelical theology. It is possible to have a director whose approach is more on counselling insights and illustrated by biblical verses. It does not seem to matter what the theological position of the director is in that case, but theology matters to evangelicals. This part of the book reflects the path which the author has trodden on his journey to find Christ in all the Scriptures. You will be stimulated to learn of Aquinas, Guigo, Teresa and so on.

The other matter which I regretted was there is no reference to the rich writing about prayer and our relationship with God which is found in the reformed tradition. Think of Calvin, Cranmer or The Reformed Pastor of Richard Baxter. Before Teresa, Baxter visualised the believer's life to be like a house and Christ was to be invited into every room. Then there is the great contribution of John Bunyan. I am told that at a theological conference in the USA Cardinal Ratzinger as he was then, remarked that he often referred to the Institutes of John Calvin and thought nothing finer had been written on prayer than that section of the book.

At the end of each chapter in this book are seven Bible passages which can be read over the week before the next chapter is read. However the book can also be read without recourse to the Bible readings. I would commend this book for the challenge it has made to me think about how I read the Bible.

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