

BOOK REVIEWS

God's Wedding Band: Reflections on the Creation-Evolution Controversy, by Norman De Jong. Winimac, IN: Redeemer Books, 1990. Forewords by Gary Parker and Henry M. Morris. Pp. 102, including index. \$7.95.

Norman De Jong is a professor of education at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, IL, who with *God's Wedding Band* makes his first book-length foray into the creation-evolution debate. Most of the material for this book was earlier published as a series of articles in *Christian Renewal* magazine, where it was part of a larger body of material challenging the "evolutionary theism" of Howard Van Till and his colleagues at Calvin College, which is Dr. De Jong's alma mater. "Evolutionary theism" is Van Till's own desired label for his views, as expressed during a visit to Dordt College in 1990. The majority of support for these colleges is given from members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, of which Drs. De Jong and Van Till are members.

With this background, we may better assess a book which attempts to place serious biblical questions before those who would seek to combine theories of evolution with Christian faith in their attempts to explain the origin and history of the earth and universe. De Jong's position is that evolutionary theory is simply incompatible with the information given in Scripture on the origin and history of the earth, and therefore any attempt to fuse Christianity with evolutionism ends up taking the wrong side in the battle between believers in the God of the Bible and the followers of Satan on this earth. With this position we are in solid agreement.

God's Wedding Band constitutes a somewhat unique approach to the literature defending "creationism" against evolutionism. De Jong begins his work with several chapters devoted to the absence of peace between many scientists and Christian teachers. He concludes that, contrary to the claims of many modern scientists, the real war is not between science and religion, but between the followers of God and the followers of unbelief. Indeed, it is ultimately a battle between God and Satan according to this author. The focus of De Jong's approach to this battle is more on the history of the earth subsequent to creation, and

especially upon the reality of the worldwide flood at the time of Noah, as contradicting evolution, rather than upon the nature and content of the creation account itself.

De Jong in this volume presents two main reasons for Christians to reject evolutionary theory. His first contention is that it is impossible to reconcile a long age for earth with the brief times allowed by reading the genealogies of Genesis (and their later repetitions in Scripture) in any other than a strictly direct fashion. The second is that it is impossible (or ought to be) for Christians to accept a uniformitarian view of geologic history in the face of the cataclysmic and universal nature of the Noahic flood.

In view of the fact that De Jong wishes to take the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 as necessarily limiting the age of the earth since the time of Adam to about 6000 years, creationists and noncreationists alike will be surprised at his dismissal of the existence of any meaningful chronology in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Biblically numbered years for this author have great significance, while "days," and especially the enumerated days of Genesis 1, are either "not important or not the primary message that God is revealing to us." Without requiring that the central message of Genesis 1 be chronology, we find it hard to accept the idea that the same is unimportant as a part of what is revealed there. De Jong might well be accused of the same cavalier treatment of scriptural data which he evidently attributes to those who take the biblically described universality of the flood as having little to do with the message of that account.

De Jong's use of the Genesis genealogies in this fashion not only raises the question of consistency in hermeneutic, but also a fundamental question concerning the use of the biblical genealogies to calculate dates for various events. Most conservative commentators hold this to be an illegitimate use of these genealogies, and De Jong should at least have given some explanation for ignoring Luke's addition of Cainan between Arphaxad and Shelah in his own calculations.

In this book we are treated to a nice bit of information, that rainbows sometimes appear as complete circles when viewed from high altitudes (evidently assumed to be God's perspective). However, to conclude therefore that the rainbow is "God's wedding band" with great theological significance, seems somewhat beside the point of the book, and indeed something that needs a good bit more elucidation and discussion before we all start concluding that we have a God's eye view during jet flights across thunderstorms. On the other hand, De Jong's

point that the Noahic flood provides a solid piece of biblical information not consonant with evolutionary uniformitarianism is right on.

God's Wedding Band is an interesting book from within the conservative Reformed community which includes a good bit of helpful information, and some questionable argument as well. As a part of the discussion it is useful. It includes a few minor defects ("alloy" for "alloy" and "expensive" for "expansive" on page 11) and one major one, the constant misspelling of the surname of Howard Van Till, one of De Jong's opponents in the ongoing debate.

Robert E. Grossmann

Theonomy: A Reformed Critique, by William S. Barker & W. Robert Godfrey, eds. Grand Rapids: Academia Books, 1990. Pp. 413. \$14.95.

Critiques of Dominion Theology, or Christian Reconstruction, or theonomy as it is more popularly called, have been forthcoming from various circles almost from the beginning of its appearance some twenty years ago.

A recent critique of this movement has been made by the dispensationalists, H. Wayne House and Thomas Ice, in their book, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Multnomah Press, 1988), a review of which by this reviewer appeared in the 1989 issue of *Vox Reformata* (No.53, [Nov.1989], 52-54). Things covered there need not be repeated in this review.

The contributors of essays to this volume are members of the faculties of the Westminster Theological Seminaries, East and West. As the editors state in the Preface, "having begun in Reformed or Calvinistic circles, theonomy has in the last decade proved attractive to a wider group of American evangelicals and fundamentalists, including some charismatics. . .Chief among its leading characteristics are an emphasis on the Old Testament law, stress on the continued normativity not only of the moral law but also of the judicial law of Old Testament Israel, including its penal sanctions. . .so that it is the duty of civil government to enforce that law and execute its penalties. . .Usually, Christian reconstruction is characterized by a postmillennial eschatology" (9-10).

This book is divided into five main parts and contains fifteen essays. Two are written in connection with Part One, "Theonomy and Biblical Law: Basic Orientations" (Robert D. Knudsen, Tremper Longman III); three in connection with Part Two, "Theonomy and Biblical Theologies:

Systematic Approaches" (Bruce K. Waltke, John M. Frame, Vern S. Poythress); three in connection with Part Three, "Theonomy and Covenant Continuity: New Testament Evidences" (Dan G. McCartney, Moises Silva, Dennis E. Johnson); four in connection with Part Four, "Theonomy and Triumphalist Dangers: Specific Concerns" (Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., William S. Barker, John R. Muether, Timothy J. Keller); and three in connection with Part Five, "Theonomy and the Reformed Heritage: Historical Connections" (W. Robert Godfrey, Sinclair B. Ferguson, Samuel T. Logan, Jr.). A concluding chapter by D. Clair Davis, "A Challenge to Theonomy," together with name and Scripture indices, complete the contents of the book which comprises a balanced assessment and critique of the movement.

A particularly helpful feature of this collective critique is that each of the writers approaches the subject from a commitment to the Westminster confessional standards. Consequently, this critique is from a consistently Reformed perspective. While all the essays have a positive contribution to make, mention here can only be made of several.

Longman's essay is entitled, "God's Law and Mosaic Punishment Today." While recognizing for the most part the merits of some aspects of theonomic penology, such as restitution rather than incarceration for crime, he legitimately questions enforcing the death penalty for sins (crimes?) against the first table of the law (sabbath breaking, sorcery, blasphemy). Even restitution according to the Old Testament prescription becomes problematical as to its consistent application. "What if I don't want four or five cars (in restitutive payment for a stolen car), can I receive a cash equivalent? If so, who will determine the present value of the car?" (51). Hence, even where Old Testament law might be applicable, the threat of multiplied bureaucracy looms large. Application of Old Testament law, therefore, on a one to one basis is not as simple and clearcut on the surface as it would seem to be, though a better application of its principles might well be worth more serious consideration (54).

An interesting feature of the book is that several authors (Frame and Poythress in particular) critically examine Meredith G. Kline's position contra theonomy ("Comments on an Old-New Error," *Westminster Theological Journal*, (No.41, Fall, 1978) and critique it as well as theonomy. However, some of Frame's difficulties with Kline's view (the title of his essay is, "The One, the Many, and Theonomy") do not appear to be well-taken, to this reviewer at any rate. While Kline's appeal to the Noahic covenant of common grace (Gen. 9:1-17)

as establishing the basis for government rather than Israel's theocratic form of government may be criticized as simplistic when the attempt to work out its details is made, the basis of this covenant nevertheless would appear to provide the framework for New Testament writers (i.e., Paul and Peter) when they refer to the role of (pagan) government as it relates to the populace generally and to the church (now the Christocracy replacing the Old Testament theocracy) particularly.

Poythress' essay is entitled, "Effects of Interpretive Frameworks on the Application of Old Testament Law." His difficulties with Kline's view are like Frame's. "Intrusionists prejudice the question of whether we can find principles of universal justice in Mosaic statutes" (113). However, since no one denies the moral applicability of any given law (even judicial and ceremonial), one is left wondering if this caveat against Kline's view is more of a misrepresentation than a just criticism? At any rate, we could agree that, "if we rigidly applied a principle of continuity (theonomy?), with no understanding of the typological role of the high priest, we would be forced to set up a contemporary earthly high priest for ourselves" (119). But does what Poythress next says about Kline's view follow? "If we rigidly applied a principle of discontinuity, we would simply learn nothing about principles for organizing a modern state" (119). Does this mean that the latter view must ignore the relevant data of the New Testament in this regard, or even relevant principles of the Old Testament where they apply? The argumentation, possibly even about both frameworks, seems overdrawn to say the least.

Gaffin's essay, "Theonomy and Eschatology: Reflections on Postmillennialism," is a high water mark of the book. Here, he correctly presents amillennialism as it has been defined and held to by G. Vos, J. Murray, and even B.B. Warfield. Then he contrasts the biblical teaching of present suffering for this age with theonomy's triumphalistic postmillennialism which leaves little, if any, place for the Pauline "detached involvement" in the affairs of this world (221).

Other very worthwhile chapters are: Barker's "Theonomy, Pluralism, and the Bible" (the state should serve the Lord by following his law in the area of human relations and allow his people the freedom to preach the gospel, 241); Muether's "The Theonomic Attraction" (the attempt to establish a biblical American civil government has been a continuing dream since the time of America's founding); Godfrey's "Calvin and Theonomy" (despite the claims of theonomy, Calvin was no theonomist); Ferguson's "An Assembly of Theonomists? The Teaching of the Westminster Divines on the Law of God" (the

Westminster divines weren't theonomists either, as their interpretation of "general equity" among other things [348], makes clear); and Logan's "New England Puritans and the State" (even the Puritans, whom theonomists claim for their view, "altered the Old Testament judicial law in very significant ways" [383], and "did not see themselves as some kind of reincarnation of the nation of Israel" [384]).

The merits of this book far outweigh the criticisms that may be made of it. It adequately serves as a well-informed and Reformed answer to the Reconstructionist position, and deserves the attention and interest, especially, of readers in the Reformed community.

Raymond O. Zorn

Return to Reason: A Critique of Enlightenment Evidentialism and a Defense of Reason and Belief in God, by Kelly James Clark. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990. Pp. ix + 158. \$10.95.

As the title of Clark's book intimates, he aims to present a case for a proper understanding of the nature and use of reason in relation to our belief in God. His book is an exercise in what is often termed "philosophy of religion," or an evaluation in philosophical terms of the issue of religious conviction and its "reasons." The question he raises: Is it "reasonable" to believe in God and to affirm certain truths of faith?, requires that we reconsider what we mean by reason and what it takes for something to count as reasonable.

Clark introduces his study with a clear statement of the question he wants to address. He argues that among intellectuals since the 18th century Enlightenment, belief in God has suffered because of the crucial Enlightenment assumption of *evidentialism*. Evidentialism "maintains that a belief is rational for a person only if that person has sufficient evidence or reasons for that belief"(3). Since the 18th century, the argument has consistently been made, on the basis of this evidentialist assumption, that religious belief cannot be demonstrated by appeal to sufficient reason or evidences. The old enterprise of "natural theology," which sought to provide reasons for the rational acceptability of faith, shipwrecks on the rock of this assumption and is an abysmal failure. There simply is insufficient evidence to establish the proposition that God exists.

In response to this "evidentialist objection to belief in God," three alternatives have been pursued. The first alternative, which Clark terms "theistic evidentialism," shares this foundational assumption of

evidentialism, but counters that there is indeed sufficient evidence for theistic belief. Among those who have adopted this approach, he mentions Richard Swinburne, Basil Mitchell, C.S. Lewis, William Paley, B.B. Warfield, Norman Geisler, R.C. Sproul and John Gerstner. This is the alternative favored among evangelicals today.

The second alternative, which Clark terms "fideism," maintains that one should believe in God in the absence of any compelling evidence or reason. This approach argues that we must proceed from the standpoint of faith and it is therefore wrong to appeal to evidence or reason independently of faith. Here Clark singles out as representatives Tertullian, Kierkegaard and Karl Barth.

The third alternative, and the one which Clark aims to develop and defend, is that of "Reformed epistemology." In this approach a theory of knowledge is developed which radically differs from that which is assumed in Enlightenment rationalism. Against the common assumptions of evidentialism, this theory of knowledge avoids both the pitfalls of rationalism and fideism by developing a view of rationality which is more hospitable to belief in God. Clark singles out as representatives of this development the contemporary philosophers of religion: Alvin Plantinga of the University of Notre Dame, Nicholas Wolterstorff of Yale University, William Alston of Syracuse University and George Mavrodes of the University of Michigan.

Clark divides his study into two major divisions. The first, "The Way of Argument," critically examines the evidentialist approach to the defense of the reasonableness of theistic belief. The second, "The Way of Reason," develops the main lines of a Reformed epistemology which is neither rationalistic in an Enlightenment sense nor fideistic.

In the first major division of his study, Clark carefully argues two theses. The first is that it is impossible to "prove" the existence of God or establish upon the basis of a strict evidentialist assumption the rationality of religious belief. In making his case for this thesis, Clark presents a clear and concise summary of various classical and more recent arguments for the existence of God and shows how each of them fails by the strict standard of evidentialism. In doing so he argues that all so-called "proofs" for the existence of God are "person-relative"; they have an irreducibly "psychological" component, since their premises and principles are not acknowledged by all. For an argument to serve as a "proof," it must not only be valid and sound but also "cogent," that is, recognized to be valid and sound. The problem with the traditional proofs is that they do not "prove" cogent to everyone; they cannot compel faith.

The second thesis Clark develops in this first division of his study is that the theist need only offer a "defense" of the reasonableness of his faith against those who argue that it is inconsistent, for example, with the presence of evil. Rather than requiring a "theodicy," a demonstration of the justness of God's ways, the theist needs only to provide a "defense" which shows the compatibility of theistic belief with the reality of evil. The "reasonableness" of faith is adequately defended, when the arguments against faith have been refuted.

In the second major division of his study, Clark sketches out the main lines of an alternative "Reformed" epistemology. This epistemology starts by rejecting one of the key components of evidentialism, namely, its treatment of belief in God as though it were analogous to a scientific hypothesis based upon reasonable evidence. Clark argues that belief in God is of a different sort; it is more akin to our belief in other persons. We believe in the existence of other persons "immediately" and do not require rational arguments and proof; the same is true of our belief in God.

According to Clark, a Reformed epistemology also differs from classical evidentialism in that it modifies what may count as a "properly basic" belief. Evidentialism as an epistemology is a form of "foundationalism." It argues that all rationally justified beliefs must be either "foundational" beliefs or beliefs justifiably inferred from such beliefs. "Foundational" or "properly basic" beliefs are those beliefs which are self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible (e.g., such as $2 + 2 = 4$, all bachelors are unmarried males, and the whole is equal to the sum of its parts). "Nonbasic beliefs" are those which one justifiably holds on the basis of such "properly basic" beliefs. The problem with classical foundationalism, however, is that it has been unable to establish a set of properly basic beliefs which provide a foundation for all the reasonable beliefs we have.

Clark's proposal, following the lead of Plantinga, Wolterstorff and Mavrodes, is to enlarge the field of properly basic beliefs to include belief in God and many other beliefs (e.g., memory beliefs, beliefs about the past, belief in other minds, belief in the testimony of others) which have traditionally been excluded by evidentialists. Following the earlier approach of Thomas Reid's "common sense" foundationalism, we should think of man's noetic structure as created by God to include a greater number of properly basic beliefs than evidentialism allows.

Though these are in brief form only a few of the more important steps in Clark's argument, they make clear the approach Clark wishes to take to the question of the reasonableness of faith.

In my judgment, Clark is to be commended for providing a well-written, concise and accessible presentation of the approach to the defense of the faith which has come to be associated with the names of Plantinga, Wolterstorff, Alston and Mavrodes. Though he does not strike out on any new paths of his own, his is a readable and helpful discussion of an important contemporary attempt to develop a Reformed epistemology which is neither rationalistic nor fideistic.

Clark's treatment and criticism of evidentialism in its various forms also provides an excellent introduction to classical and contemporary evidentialism. To employ terms Clark himself uses, I found his argument against evidentialism not only valid and sound but also "cogent." Defenders of evidentialism would do well to ponder Clark's case.

There are two points of criticism, however, that need to be registered.

The first is Clark's neglect to even mention the distinctive approach to the defense of the faith associated with the name of Cornelius Van Til. This neglect is unfortunate in a book which aims to summarize classical and contemporary approaches to the defense of the faith and to develop a distinctively "Reformed epistemology." Since Van Til tirelessly argued for a "Reformed" epistemology and has had a significant influence in North American evangelical and Reformed circles, his position warrants at least some notice. Furthermore, though I suspect Clark would identify Van Til as a "fideist," there are some significant formal similarities between his "presuppositionalism" and Clark's "modified foundationalism" which require exploration and clarification.

The second point relates to the first. Clark, following Plantinga in particular, acknowledges that his position amounts to a return to the type of epistemology associated with Thomas Reid's "common sense" foundationalism. "Common sense" foundationalism is really a form of "innatism"; there are a number of properly basic beliefs which belong to the "noetic structure" of the human mind by virtue of the way God has created it. These properly basic beliefs comprise the faculty of reason.

However, in addition to these properly basic beliefs (sometimes termed "deliverances of reason" by Plantinga), there are the distinctive beliefs of the Christian faith given through revelation. In other words, the Reformed epistemology Clark is defending is similar to the view of Thomas Aquinas on the relation of faith and reason; it is a view which speaks of understanding "and" faith, not of faith which seeks understanding.

There are two, related questions which this epistemology must face more directly, if it genuinely wishes to be "Reformed." The first is what is termed the "noetic effects" of sin. Very little attention is given by Clark to the significance of the fall into sin for the employment of our God-given noetic structure. The second has to do with the role of the self-attesting authority of Scripture in our knowledge of the truth. These issues need to be addressed, lest the Reformed epistemology Clark and others are defending prove to be only a new version of an older Thomist apologetic which significantly differs from the classic Reformed view of the relation between faith and reason.

Cornelis P. Venema

An Ember Still Glowing: Humankind as the Image of God, by Harry R. Boer. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990. Pp. x + 187. \$14.95.

Harry Boer states in the introduction to this study of the image of God that it is the fruit of a lifetime of labor as a minister of the gospel on the mission field. His intention is to develop an understanding of the image of God which answers to the needs of the mission field and affords a better foundation for the preaching of the gospel than the traditional form of this doctrine in Reformed theology.

The basic thesis of Boer's study is clearly enunciated in the introduction:

By image of God I do not mean some characteristic or quality human beings have in common with God, so that every person can be said to be "an image of God." Rather, I see mankind—the whole of mankind, past, present, and future, male and female, old and young, every race of Man, and as an organic unit—to constitute the one image of God. In this one mighty and varied human entity, all women and men participate (ix).

This image of God, though distorted by the condition of sin, is an "ember still glowing," a reality in the service of which Christ is accomplishing his saving work.

Boer attempts to support this thesis in the opening chapters of this study by reviewing the biblical teaching concerning the image of God. He then critiques a number of themes in classic Reformed theology which are incompatible with it, and provides an account of the implications of his position for the church's mission.

In the opening chapters on the biblical teaching concerning the image of God, Boer offers what might well be termed an "impressionistic" reading of the biblical texts. Though one might have expected a more careful exegesis of the important texts which bear upon the subject of the image of God, Boer simply takes Genesis 1:26-27 as pivotal and hinges a good bit of his argument upon its use of the singular, "man." According to Boer, this text identifies the image of God with the way in which male and female, and all who are born "after the likeness" of our first parents, Adam and Eve, participate in the one image of God. This singular, organic image of God (which Boer usually terms "Man"), in which each human being participates, denotes the peculiar and unique way in which men and women are "persons" who were created with a capacity for and willingness to live in fellowship with God and others, and to exercise dominion over the creation entrusted to "Man's" care (7).

After this brief and impressionistic treatment of some of the biblical texts pertaining to the image of God, Boer develops a rather intriguing supporting argument from the biblical accounts of Melchizedek. In these accounts, we discover that God's redemptive purpose through Abraham and his seed was a "provisional particularism" which subserved his universal purpose to redeem the whole of mankind. Melchizedek's role in the biblical record reminds us that even Abraham and his seed were subject to the "king of Salem" whom God was pleased to recognize as a representative of the organic unity of the human race. Boer maintains that:

[s]ymbolically, the priest-king of Salem was universal Man and, as such, representative of 'God Most High, maker of heaven and earth.' In the historic meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek, the representative of provisional particularism gave tithes to and received blessing from the representative of God's permanent strategy of universal redemptive concern (25-26).

The accounts of Melchizedek, then, remind us that God's interest in redemption focusses upon Man, the image of God as the organic unity of the human race.

Upon the basis of this identification of the image of God with "Man," Boer proceeds to take direct aim at several fundamental doctrines in classical Reformed theology. He rejects the twin doctrines of "total depravity" and "common grace," for example, arguing that the former exaggerates unbiblically the effects of sin upon the image of

God and that the latter is an unnecessary doctrinal accretion. Since "Man" as the image of God is not "totally depraved" in the traditional sense but retains his created structure and "functional dynamic" after the fall, "common grace" is no longer needed as a post-fall bestowal which restrains the development of sin (71). According to Boer, the image of God serves quite well the purpose ascribed traditionally to common grace; by virtue of this image of God in which all human beings continue to participate, sinful men and women are able to resist any inordinate development of the power of sin.

For similar reasons, Boer repudiates the Reformed view that the Spirit's work in regeneration is tantamount to a work of new creation or a second birth. This view, Boer argues, treats the sinner as though he were a passive, non-participant in the accomplishment of redemption. As he puts it:

We must here face quite explicitly a central thesis of this book. It is that Man as *imago Dei*—and therefore all participants in the *imago*, that is, all members of the human race—has the competence to respond affirmatively to the proclamation of the gospel. Every hearer of the gospel has the spiritual resource to believe the gospel and become a living member of the body of Christ. In this sense, he can decide to be born again [note well!] (85).

The image of God is like an ember still glowing, to be compared to the pilot light on a gas range which has latent within it the capacity to burst into flame (86). So it is with the image of God when it is energized and fanned into flame by the working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we may not deny the creative and active involvement of the image of God in the work of redemption.

In the concluding chapters of the book, Boer critically addresses several additional features of Reformed theology. Though he acknowledges that salvation is a free gift of God's grace in Christ, he insists that this truth may not be used, as in Reformed theology traditionally, to minimize the necessary response of human faith. He also emphatically rejects the historic Reformed and biblical understanding of predestination, arguing that it violates the organic unity of the whole human race as the image of God by drawing an irrevocable distinction between "elect" and "reprobate." For Boer this understanding of predestination is deterministic and fails to allow for the way in which God's time and the creature's time intersect and mutually influence one another (148). We need, Boer argues, to replace the austerity of God's

sovereign disposal over his creation and human image-bearers so characteristic of Reformed orthodoxy with the dynamism of God's immanence in which God interacts with his creatures. Finally, we need to recognize that the "whole of humanity" is "elect in Christ," even though we may not draw the conclusion that all human beings will ultimately be saved.

Does God redeem the entirety of mankind, person for person? Certainly not on this side of eternity. But is the dichotomy of the present dispensation to be characteristic of the age to come? In principle, the answer to this question was set forth in the preceding chapter (185).

With this characteristic quote, I will conclude this brief synopsis of Boer's thesis and argument. Though each of them merits more complete consideration, there are some important problems with Boer's thesis and argument that I should like to note briefly.

One such problem is the way Boer often resorts to caricature and misrepresentation of the position of classic Reformed theology in order to advance his argument. He insists, for example, that the Reformed doctrine of reprobation makes God's eternal, irrevocable decree the "cause" of the unbelief and impenitence of the reprobate (81). But Reformed theology, and the confession known as the Canons of Dort, have always expressly rejected this charge! Here Boer persists in neglecting the traditional distinction between reprobation as "preterition" (God's sovereign good pleasure to "pass by" or not elect to save some) and condemnation (God's just punishment upon those who are sinners and who do not believe the gospel). He likewise terms the Reformed appeal to "mystery" in explaining God's sovereignty and human responsibility a "plain contradiction and therefore an irrationality" (97). But when he acknowledges the problem of his own simultaneous affirmations of man's "capacity for faith" and God's *sovereign* grace in Christ, as well as his reluctance to draw the obvious universalistic conclusion of his own position, he is content to appeal to "mystery" (97, 186).

For a writer who identifies himself with the Reformed tradition, it is also surprising to see how little Boer actually appeals to the biblical text or to the confessional summary of the Bible's teaching in the course of his argument. I have already suggested that his biblical exegesis tends to be "impressionistic." At times, as in his treatment of the Melchizedek accounts, it becomes almost allegorical. Perhaps the reason for this

cavalier treatment of the biblical texts is Boer's apparently low view of the authority and normativity of the Scriptures. When considering the apostle Paul's description of the universal extent of sin in Romans 3, Boer dismisses the text's teaching as acceptable for Paul's time but no longer acceptable for our time. As he states it:

what could be accepted in Paul's time and possibly excused in Calvin's is no longer either acceptable or excusable. In the course of the centuries the Holy Spirit has fulfilled his promise to lead God's people into the truth [John 16:13], not only to the meaning of Scripture but also as to the way it should be read. The critical study of the Bible has been and continues to be a valid means of deepening the understanding of Scripture. . .(44).

With this view of the biblical text, it becomes more clear why Boer does not find it necessary to establish his position upon more responsible biblical exegesis or criticism of the confessions' summary of Scriptural teaching.

Furthermore, one of the great ironies of Boer's study is that he advertises it as a position which will serve as a help to the mission of the church. It is difficult to see, however, how the position Boer takes will prove useful to advance the proclamation of the gospel. From a missionary perspective, there are two problematical theses inherent in his position. The first is that, in his rejection of the doctrines of *particular* election and atonement, Boer opts for a position in which Christ's saving work was done on behalf of "Man" as an organic whole. The actual salvation of any person, however, *depends ultimately* upon his decision to believe. The second problem is the converse of the first. Since Christ's saving work encompasses all who participate in the image of God, the whole thrust of Boer's argument runs in the direction of an *absolute universalism*. This is buttressed by Boer's own argument that many who do not know Christ are nonetheless, as participants in the image of God, going to be saved (107-130). Neither of these theses is conducive to a missionary theology which supports the urgency of the preaching of the gospel or bases its confidence of success upon the sovereign working of the Spirit through the Word.

Finally, Boer's position is, despite the reviews of some on the back cover which praise his study for its "fresh" and "provocative" look at basic Reformed doctrines, really little more than a restatement of a classically semi-Pelagian or Arminian doctrine of salvation. Each of the so-called "five points of Calvinism" (total depravity, unconditional

election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints) comes in for a sound thrashing in this book. This is, of course, not new. But neither is Boer's proffered alternative to the classical position of the Reformed confessions and theology. Though it would take us too far afield of our purpose in a book review to demonstrate all the parallels, there is little in Boer's argument that has not been said before, whether by Jacobus Arminius and the Remonstrants or by many late Medieval theologians.

Unhappily, what Boer provides us in this book is little more or less than what the Canons of Dort, echoing the teaching of Scripture, rejected almost four centuries ago. The only thing that might be "fresh" or "provocative" about this, is that Boer frontally attacks the Canons of Dort while remaining a minister in a denomination (Christian Reformed) which asks all her ministers to subscribe to them as fully agreeing with the Word of God.

Cornelis P. Venema

Puritan Christianity in America: Religion and Life in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts, by Allen Carden. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. Pp. 239. \$16.95.

Puritanism is much misunderstood, if not maligned, today. And in some circles to be considered a Puritan is even worse than to be called a Calvinist!

Yet the Puritans, long gone from the stage of history, nevertheless exercised an influence in their day that was out of proportion to their numerical size and which is still pervasively present in various ways till the present day.

Allen Carden, Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Spring Arbor College, is the author of this book. In 14 chapters, together with an appendix, select bibliography, and index, he delineates that "reformist religious movement (popularly known as Puritanism) comprised of people who took issue with the Church of England in matters of polity, style, and doctrine, and who desired to discard 'Romish' practices, to exercise congregational autonomy and authority, and to build their society on the Bible as the final authority" (11-12).

The Puritans under Oliver Cromwell achieved their most notable, though short-lived, political success in England with the overthrow of Charles I in 1649 and the establishment of a republican government which ended shortly after Cromwell's death in 1658. Religiously, they

were influential in the production of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, and in this their legacy is more enduring.

Their most notable achievement, however, is the influence they had upon the new world of America with the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony after the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620.

Carden's book makes clear that, while the Puritan ideal was of a godly, communal, consensus-oriented community led by Christian magistrates and clergy, set as a city on a hill for all the world to see and emulate (209), it did not long endure beyond the first generation, for it was progressively eroded by secularization of thought, individualism, and cultural and religious pluralism (221) which in turn have themselves become primary American values.

Carden gives an objective presentation of the Puritan mind, vision, theology, worship, private exercise of piety, social ethics, family life, concept of government, education, culture, and recreation. There are some surprises along the way in this development, e.g., the Puritan view of sex which was anything but repressed and repressive, though hedged about (and rightly so) by the institution of marriage.

Carden's concluding chapter is particularly valuable, for in it he points out no less than fifteen areas in which the Puritan worldview continues to have an impact on the American character. They are: education, democracy, a regenerate church membership, disenfranchisement of church from state, an educated ministry, a hallowed Sunday, integrity of moral character, a work ethic that leaves little room for frivolous pursuits, thriftiness, a healthy view of sex, a sense of American identity and mission, and less favorably, an anti-Indian and anti-Catholic sentiment.

Carden and the publisher are to be commended for making available to the public a book that not only clears up misconceptions about Puritanism but even more importantly sets it within a perspective that is helpful in seeing the continuing beneficial influences of this movement and the necessity, moreover, to strengthen that which remains as savoring salt in our society.

Raymond O. Zorn

The C.S. Lewis Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to His Life, Thought and Writings, by Colin Duriez. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. Pp. 255. \$9.95.

C.S. Lewis, an Oxford University don, novelist, amateur theologian and philosopher, died in 1963, before reaching the age of 65. During his fruitful lifetime he produced almost 60 books, some of the most charming of which are the seven volumes of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, an extended allegory of Christian life whose mythical story in itself is equally fascinating for children and adults alike.

Lewis was an atheist in his earlier years but, after his conversion to Christianity (the Church of England), he became one of its ablest apologetes. He could write from experience and he knew how to present in erudite fashion books and treatises on all manner of subjects: joy, love, idealism, God, the Bible, prayer, miracles, imagination, naturalism and supernaturalism, myth, Romanticism, transposition, heaven, etc., etc.

One of his cleverest treatises was his small book on the subject of hell. Entitled, *The Screwtape Letters*, it was allegedly a number of letters of advice from a senior devil to his nephew, Wormwood, on how to secure the damnation of his assigned charge. Unfortunately, Wormwood's charge becomes a Christian and is ultimately lost to "the Enemy" (the devils' name for God). First appearing as a series in a religious journal, the Letters were so successful that one reader, a country clergyman, cancelled his subscription because "much of the advice given in these letters (is) positively diabolical" (181).

Colin Duriez, therefore, has done the reading public a service with the publication of this handbook which in alphabetical order gives a definition of names and places in Lewis' books, together with longer articles of interest about Lewis' writings, views, friends, and people who influenced him in one way or another (including his wife, Helen Joy Davidman) and who shaped his thinking and writing. Here we learn about the Inklings, talented male friends of Lewis' who met together at least once a week at The Eagle and Child pub in St. Giles "to drink beer and to discuss, among other things, the books they were writing" (91). The group included such famous men as: J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and others, all close friends of Lewis.

Books about Lewis (he preferred being called Jack rather than Clive or Staples) continue to be written and already exceed in number (over 70) the books written by Lewis. Duriez has handily listed both categories at the end of his book for further reference.

Duriez regards Lewis as a twentieth century John Bunyan (9), though to be sure, he is this and more. It is hoped that this book will extend "Lewis' own aims in the breadth of his writings" (10).

Raymond O. Zorn

On the Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation, by Les L. Steele. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. Pp. 202. \$11.95.

The author of this book has had pastoral experience in several churches and now teaches Christian Education at Seattle Pacific University.

Steele's aim "is to bring together the Christian story with the insights of psychology, critiqued by Christian theology (in the Wesleyan tradition), in order to describe a practical theology of Christian formation" (10).

The book has four major divisions and thirteen chapters, together with a bibliography and index at the back. The divisions are entitled, "Theology and Christian Formation" (four chapters), "Psychology and Christian Formation" (three chapters), "An Integrative Approach to Christian Formation" (two chapters), and "Cycles of Christian Formation" (four chapters).

In the first division, Steele presents and analyzes the biblical material from the Gospels, Paul's Epistles, and the General Epistles on the subject of growing and maturing Christian living, i.e., "the process of becoming what we were first intended to be (before the Fall) and are now allowed to be by the justifying work of Christ in the process of sanctification" (24). He concludes this division by observing, "Christian formation combines orthodoxy (right belief), orthopraxy (right practice) and orthopathy (right feeling and concern)" (53).

In the second major division, Steele presents and critiques three schools of psychology: Freud's psychoanalysis, which is too preoccupied with unconscious drives and processes to be of much use to Christian formation; B.F. Skinner's Behaviorism, which explains what happens but not what ought to happen; and Humanistic/Self Psychology, which is too optimistic about human capacities for self-realization.

In this same division, Steele then examines developmental psychological theories (Piaget, Kohlberg, Erik Erikson) which he finds more favorable for understanding the human side of Christian formation. He briefly presents several authors (Ronald Goldman, James Fowler, Lewis

Sherrill, John Westerhoff) who have used developmental theory in their efforts to understand spiritual development (87).

In the third division, Steele devotes two chapters to the presentation of an integrative approach to Christian formation, developing such subjects as: faith, vision, self-criticism, self-in-community, self-in-process, culture, the Holy Spirit, etc. It is here that Steele combines the psychological with the theological understanding of such things particularly as faith, which he defines as follows:

Faith as both divine initiative and human response is best understood within the categories of orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy. We are particularly interested here in discussing the human side of faith, which includes belief, behavior, and attitude. Another way to understand this threefold definition is to think in terms of cognitive, physical, and emotional aspects of human faith (102).

In the fourth division, Steele presents and analyzes the major cycles of Christian formation (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) with each having their own growth rates, needs, and learning readiness, which must be taken into account for successful pedagogy.

In the final chapter, Steele combines the various aspects previously presented in the book as he considers aims of education, the student's needs, the teacher's variegated task, the process of learning, the curriculum, the environment, etc. This chapter should be of especial interest to and use by the teacher.

Some questionable assertions occur here and there: "only after the fall do we find any sense of submission of the female to the male" (19); "Good Friday was a horrible day with no redeeming qualities" (52); one must not overemphasize human inability lest it undermine human responsibility (102); truth is more than propositional (179), these tend to reveal the author's Arminian theological position.

On the whole, however, Steele has presented a rather successful mix of scriptural truth and psychological insight for the purpose of aiding in the process of Christian growth. The book should be of particular help to pastors and Christian education teachers, though it can also be profitably read for personal edification in Christian living.

Raymond O. Zorn

Perspectives on the Word of God: An Introduction to Christian Ethics, by John M. Frame. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1990. Pp. viii + 66, including indices. \$6.00.

The contents of this little book consist of three lectures delivered at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1988. In these lectures, John Frame, professor of Apologetics and Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, provides a short version of a much more substantial argument in his *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. He also presents something of a preview of the main theses of two projected works in theology, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* and *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Those who are acquainted with or interested in the main theses of what Frame terms "perspectivalism," will find this study a helpful and accessible introduction.

In the first lecture, "The Nature of the Word of God," Frame summarizes the main lines of this approach. After acknowledging that "God himself is the ultimate criterion of truth, and therefore his word to us, his revelation, is the standard by which all truth claims must be judged" (6), Frame argues that any act of human knowing is a complex one, comprised of a variety of components (e.g., reason, sense-experience, intuition) which together constitute human "subjectivity." In such an act of knowing there are "three crucial elements: (1) an object of knowledge, something that is known; (2) a subject of knowledge, the person who knows; and (3) a norm, criterion, or standard, by which we justify our claims to knowledge" (7). These three elements are mutually related and interdependent; they correspond to what Frame terms the "situational perspective," the "existential perspective," and the "normative perspective."

To illustrate the role of these perspectives in the act of human knowing, Frame suggests that they correspond roughly to three different approaches to apologetics or the defense of the faith. Evidentialism tends to look at the defense of the faith in terms of the "situational" perspective, treating the object of knowledge (the given evidence) as foundational to any apprehension of the truth. Subjectivism places an inordinate emphasis upon the "existential perspective," treating the subject of knowledge as primary. Presuppositionalism takes its point of departure in a "normative perspective" which is oriented to the self-attesting authority of the Word of God as the norm for our knowledge of the truth. The inclination to treat these apologetical approaches as contradictory arises from a failure to recognize the different

"perspectives" which dominate their respective methods. However, when we recognize the three-fold nature of all human knowledge, we are able to recognize that each of these approaches complements the other by emphasizing one aspect of human knowledge of the truth.

In his general discussion of the nature of the Word of God, Frame similarly argues that the Word of God has three distinct meanings, each of which corresponds to one of these three perspectives. The Word of God is, firstly, the "power" by which God brings all things to pass; the Word creates and controls all possible objects of human knowledge (the situational perspective). The Word of God is, secondly, God's "authoritative speech," the norm or standard by which all things are to be measured (the normative perspective). And the Word of God is, thirdly, God's "personal presence" with his creatures (the existential perspective). Accordingly, Frame concludes that "God's word is the self-expression of his lordship. His word is the expression of his control, authority, and presence—his self-insinuation into the three 'perspectives' of human knowledge" (16).

In the second lecture, "The Media of the Word of God," Frame sketches briefly the various means or instruments whereby God makes himself and his will known to us. These media roughly correspond to the three perspectives inherent in all human knowledge and the threefold nature of the Word of God. God reveals himself through "events," "words" and "persons," and any apprehension of the truth requires attention to each of these media. Thus, to know the truth we need not only Scripture (word-revelation), but also the creation (event-revelation) and Spirit-directed apprehension (person-revelation). The truth is apprehended to the degree that we give appropriate consideration to each of these media of the Word of God in their mutual interrelation.

In the third lecture, "The Word of God and Christian Ethics," Frame applies this "perspectival" approach to the classic arguments among "existential," "teleological" and "deontological" ethics. Each of these apparently contradictory approaches, can be interpreted as overemphasizing one of the three "perspectives" determinative not only of what we know to be true (doctrine) but also of what we ought to do (ethics). In a Christian "perspectivalism," however, each of these perspectives is coordinated and granted its role in the determination of right and wrong conduct. What we ought to do is derived from a simultaneous discernment of the situation (the situational perspective), the circumstances of the ethical agent (the existential perspective), and the biblical norms (the normative perspective).

Though helpful as an introduction to the approach Frame and others (including Vern Poythress in his *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology*) term "perspectivalism," the statement of this approach in this little volume raises some important questions.

Though Frame maintains that "perspectivalism" is consistent with the approach to apologetics associated with the name of Cornelius Van Til and commonly termed "presuppositionalism," it may legitimately be questioned whether this is the case. The orientation and point of departure for "perspectivalism's" approach to human knowledge seems to be the *perspective of the human knower* rather than the self-attesting authority of the written Word of God. Consequently, Frame can easily dismiss the fundamental differences between "evidentialism" and "presuppositionalism" by treating them as simply different perspectives on the same reality. Similarly, he can treat the differences, for example, between the emphasis upon law in the Reformed tradition and the human subject in the charismatic tradition, in terms of their respective implications for Christian ethics, as a largely perspectival rather than substantial difference (55).

One has the impression reading Frame's account of "perspectivalism" that human knowing is akin to looking through a kaleidoscope. Though the reality to be known is one and the same, it is apprehended in a variety of ways, depending upon the vantage point or perspective of the viewer/knower. Different accounts of what is given to be known are, therefore, not so much contradictory as they are complementary. Since all knowledge of the truth of God's revelation is *mediated through* our human subjectivity, it is never more than a *partial perspective* upon that truth which is absolute and final, God's Word to us (6). It is difficult to see how this approach can avoid subjectivism or the epistemological position which says that there is no absolute truth accessible to us, but only the *truth as we apprehend it from our perspective*.

Furthermore, by treating the written Word of God (the normative perspective) under the rubric of one of three, coordinate perspectives, Frame opens the door to an epistemology in which the supreme authority of the written Word of God is qualified by the word of God mediated through the creation itself and the human person. In doing so Frame seems to stray from the classical Van Tilian approach known as "presuppositionalism," in which the final measure of all truth is the self-attesting authority of the Word of God.

Cornelis P. Venema

Integrative Therapy, by Darrell Smith. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. Pp. 242. \$13.95.

The author of this book is professor of counseling psychology at Texas A & M. He advocates an eclectic approach in his methodology of psychotherapy and counseling which he calls integrative therapy, and which he defines as "a comprehensive, multidimensional approach that unifies biblical truths with complementary psychological concepts, principles, and methods derived from a variety of theoretical orientations" (11).

Smith recognizes the deficiencies of eclecticism in that it often makes for an undisciplined and poorly integrated collection of concepts which essentially "amounts to flying by the seat of one's pants" (31).

Smith feels that his method escapes this danger because he adopts the basic presuppositions of "Judeo-Christian theism or belief in the personal God revealed in the Hebrew Christian Scriptures" (41), which gives him a Christian world-view about God, the cosmos, the person, death, moral and ethical values, and history as these are revealed and defined by Scripture. This approach, he feels, give him the basis by which creatively to use and to adapt where necessary a diversity of so-called secular methods (e.g., Freudianism, Rogerianism, Skinnerianism, etc.).

Accordingly, his book consists of ten chapters divided into three parts. Part 1, "Foundations of Integrative Therapy," consists of two chapters which give the basis of his method; Part 2, "Human Development and Behavior," has three chapters which focus attention on the would-be client; and Part 3, "Process and Procedures of Integrative Therapy," embodies five chapters which set forth the practice of Smith's mode of counseling. In addition the book has four appendices, including a seventeen page "Pre-Therapy Questionnaire" whose detailed questions cover every aspect of the would-be counselee's life, and "Twelve Steps to Wholeness" which is a Christian modification of "The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous." A thirteen page bibliography and separate indices of persons, subjects, and Scripture complete the book's contents.

The reader of this book gains much useful knowledge of counseling procedures. Besides being made aware of the many schools of counseling and psychotherapy, both secular and Christian; the reader learns about personality types, developmental stages of life, different human needs, problems in living (including sin, demonic influence, psychoses, personality dysfunctions, etc.), therapeutic relationships (including love

as the supreme ethic and its different types), diagnostic procedures (including guidelines for establishing therapy goals), various modalities connected with treatment of clients (including play therapy, the door technique, nouthetic training as advocated by Jay Adams, though Smith is not an Adams' fan), homework, assertiveness training, cognitive restructuring, stress management, etc.

Chapter 10, the last chapter, is a "how to" chapter in which Smith points out how a therapist is to work with children, adolescents, adults, groups, couples, families, addicts, and how to terminate and follow up therapy treatment.

While Smith laudably maintains that "truly effective counseling or psychotherapy depends on the truth derived from both the natural and the supernatural realms" and thus urges his readers to "remain open to both of these truth sources and allow the truth parts to fall into their proper place in the integrative process" (180), it remains highly questionable as to whether his methodology succeeds in correctly discerning and properly applying the truth. For improper secular orientations, as he employs them, inevitably get in the way.

For example, in the section on logotherapy counseling (i.e., assisting patients to discover meaning in their personal existence), Smith tells us, "In such relationships (between counselor and client), therapists must be consistently careful not to impose their values on clients but to adhere to the clinical objective of helping them find their own meaning and values" (138). This may be a good dictum followed by secular counseling, but does life have meaning and value apart from Christ? And if not, shouldn't the counselor seek (in fact, isn't he obligated?) to lead the client to Him who is "the way, the truth and the life"? By following secular methodology at this point, Smith is saying in effect that the truth is only relative and, so, the counselor may be satisfied if he has helped the client to discover it as he understands it. Is this really helping the client?

Again, in the section on "Thought Control," Smith gives an example of a woman who needs to be cured from being preoccupied with negative thoughts. She is bothered by the recurring thought that God would give her a "waterhead" baby as punishment for a poor relationship with her husband. Smith maintains that at the basis of treatment for this must be the fact that "nature hates a vacuum." The disturbing thought that "God is going to punish me with a 'waterhead' baby" needs to be replaced by 'God loves my baby and me and desires the very best for both of us. And I look forward to birthing a beautiful, healthy baby'" (155). But in response to this, we ask, Is this the biblical

picture of God? He is loving, to be sure, but He also punishes sin. Should the counselor not first look into the possible need for repentance by the client? And can she be cured, as Smith avers, with the self-help of saying "stop" when the negative thought occurs, even to pinching her inner wrist as a further aid in checking the negative thought (155)? All of this, again, is borrowing "truth" from the secular humanistic camp of the Philistines which is not really truth at all but, rather, goes counter to it.

Under "Cognitive Restructuring" Smith admits that "Ellis himself is vitriolic, even hostile, toward Christianity and religious values and beliefs" (156). And yet Ellis is supposed to "have provided a method that can be adapted by Christian therapists for effective use in an integrative fashion" (156); namely, to help a person "to discern and dispute irrational beliefs and negative self-talk" (156). Does this not again presuppose the humanistic assumption that man has the capacity and needed inner resources by which to help himself?

Under "Community Focus," we learn that truth is indeed relative, for there Smith advocates the value of "consultation with family physicians and teachers; pastors, priests, or rabbis." (172). While we do not deny the relative value of this consultation, must we thereby conclude that any religion, even if it is false, is better than none? Or even worse, is it perhaps that all religions are, after all, but different ways to God? Smith does not tell us (nor presumably his client) but his method at this point is not in keeping with Christ's exclusive truth claims.

The purpose of this critique has been to show that, while Smith's aim at making eclecticism work for his integrative therapy is laudable, in actual practice it does not really work at supporting truth and avoiding error. Rather, the two become mixed up in a methodology of relativistic humanism. We do not deny that Smith, and even counselors of another stripe, can make their methods work. But their methodologies will only be of relative benefit at best. Smith, who makes Christian claims, should remember that Christianity teaches that relativism is not good enough, neither for the present and certainly not for the future.

Raymond O. Zorn