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BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Randall Balmer. *Redeemer: The Life of Jimmy Carter.* New York: Basic Books, 2014. Pp. xxvii + 273. $27.99 (cloth).

Given the purchase of religious beliefs in one's life, it may seem surprising that historians have so little regarded such in the lives of the U.S. Presidents, though recent years hold promise that such neglect may be at an end. The Founding Fathers have not suffered such religious neglect, and Lincoln as well has come under religious scrutiny, particularly in the last two decades. But presidents of more recent times (twentieth century and especially postwar presidents) have suffered comparative religious neglect. One book that has addressed the topic in more recent presidents is David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Postwar Presidents: From Truman to Obama (George H. Shriver Lecture Series in Religion in American History*; Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012). Holmes, fairly and in a non-partisan fashion, examines the religious convictions of these men. Also, in A. Scott Berg's recent work, *Wilson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2013), he purports to do the same thing in the life of Woodrow Wilson (and his chapter titles suggest such: "Ascension," "Gethsemane," "Passion," "Resurrection," and the like), though the text itself exhibits a curious absence of what Wilson's religious beliefs were and how precisely they impacted his policies.

Randall Balmer now seeks to give Jimmy Carter close religious treatment. Balmer has achieved notoriety as a "liberal" evangelical (he took a position at Dartmouth in 2012 as a chaired professor), who has brought to bear his criticism of the American evangelical scene, especially the religious right. He examines the life of Jimmy Carter as one who is sympathetic to Carter's liberal viewpoint and critical of fundamentalism and the religious right, seeing that as a betrayal of evangelicalism's historical commitments. Since Carter was not one who was bashful about his religious beliefs—some accused him, in fact, of wearing them on his sleeves—it seems unsurprising that Carter's religiosity should receive significant attention in a life and Balmer is just the person to do insofar as a biographer who shares much of Carter's belief is thought desirable.

Balmer's burden in this book, as in his career, is to establish who the true evangelicals are, or to point out that the so-called progressive evangelicals have as much, if not more, a claim to the mantle of evangelicalism as do the fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals. Balmer contends, contra much current understanding, that the

true evangelicals are those who are the heirs of the progressive evangelicals of the nineteenth century. Balmer describes these progressives: "Harking back to the Hebrew prophets, progressive evangelicals in the nineteenth century interpreted the prophetic calls for justice as a mandate for racial reconciliation and gender equality." This sort of evangelicalism, Balmer contends, was "was one time the ascendant strain of evangelicalism in America," (xiv) taking its cue especially from the judgment of the sheep and goats (how one treats the "least of these"), the parable of the good Samaritan, and Jesus' blessing on peacemakers. Charles Grandison Finney, and the other revivalists and reformers of his era, believed that a converted soul "bore responsibility for the improvement of society and especially the interests of the most vulnerable" (xv).

Thus coming out of the nineteenth-century religious revivals once witnessed "an effusion of voluntary associations dedicated to social welfare": abolition of slavery, equal rights for women (particularly the franchise), prison reform, support of public education, helping to teach literacy to adults, clothe and feed the poor, etc. "Evangelical preferences for the poor and marginalized even led them to criticize usury and to question the morality of capitalism, suggesting that the term 'business ethics' was an oxymoron because the pursuit of wealth necessarily elevated avarice above altruism" (xv).

Balmer notes that "the tradition of progressive evangelicalism faded, however, as evangelicals themselves began to retreat from the broader society in the 1910s and 1920s." The Scopes Trial (1925) resulted in much public ridicule of evangelicals that caused many to withdraw from politics and the "attempts to lure rank-and-file evangelicals to the political arena in the middle decades of the twentieth century" were often done under the rubric of anti-communism or the like, the earlier progressive aspects altogether absent. "Most evangelicals were content to remain apolitical" until the 1970s (xvi). Additionally, during all of this time, dispensational pre-millennialism had taken captive much of evangelicalism, prompting many simply to wait for the rapture rather than engage culturally. What's the point of political engagement, many in this mindset wondered, in a culture so soon doomed for destruction? As many put it in those days, why arrange the deck chairs on the Titanic?

But apolitical evangelicalism begin to change, Balmer argues, by the early 1970s. Citing his own experience as a college student, Balmer became a progressive evangelical who opposed the war in Vietnam, racial bigotry, the mistreatment and inequality of women, and the like. He discovered the same in Jimmy Carter, ultimately, a candidate who was not afraid to talk about being "born again," and who was, at the same time, in the classic progressive evangelical mold. Balmer refers to Carter as one who, like Jesus "came unto his own," and was, at first, received by many evangelicals, who, in response to

the Cold War, the radical sixties, the Vietnam protests and other perceived liberal and radical challenges to the American way of life, had turned away from the moderation and progressivism of earlier times and embraced reactionary politics as they grew fearful of an increasingly secularized culture.

Ultimately, Carter's fellow evangelicals rejected him, so that, though "he came unto his own, his own received him not" (chapters 4-7). Balmer points to a number of things for this rejection of Carter by so many evangelicals, including racism on part of many evangelicals in response to Carter's perceived over-eager embrace of desegregation and Carter's greater interest in human rights than promoting anti-communism as well as being perceived as weak on the family (he was accused of being soft on abortion and homosexuality). At any rate, by the late seventies, the rise of the Moral Majority and like organizations heralded the end of the support of many evangelicals for Carter. The irony is that they helped defeat Carter, a churchgoing ardent evangelical, for re-election in 1980, while electing Ronald Reagan who talked a better conservative game but who rarely went to church. All of this is quite galling to Balmer, so much so that he seems to lose objectivity—not that he has no criticism of Carter, he does, partly being that Carter tended to be proud and self-righteous. But Balmer seems to have no interest in discerning that part of the reason that so many evangelicals turned reactionary was due both to opposition to "godless communism" and a liberalism/modernism that, while it might have much in common with progressive evangelicalism, tended toward a practical agnosticism in the opposition that it had come to have toward the Bible. In other words, many evangelicals turned away from Carter and other progressive evangelicals because of the perception that progressives were not only politically liberal but were also religiously liberal (like those who opposed Machen, who were suspect when it came to things like affirming the virgin birth of Christ and His bodily resurrection from the dead).

One of Balmer's constant refrains is put most clearly in a paper that he wrote in 2006 for *The Chronicles of Higher Education*, "Jesus is Not a Republican." Indeed, Balmer is right that historic Christianity, and evangelicalism as a part of that, has not simply been an adjunct of a political party and that much that has come to identify the Republican Party—being the champion of unfettered capitalism and justifiers of avarice and self-interest—may conflict with the faith. But Jesus is also not a Democrat and much in their platform—one can think of their encouragements of abortion and the homosexual lifestyle—is also inimical to the faith. While Balmer rightly criticizes identifying the faith with political conservatism he makes the same mistake with regards to political progressivism. The faith is, first of all, not a political program. And the faith, secondly, may have impli-

cations that impact matters political, but not so as to be neatly categorized as conservative or liberal.

And the reason that so many evangelicals who wanted to be true to the Scriptures became conservatives was because they saw that those who departed from Scripture and were its religious critics—modernists and theological liberals—tended to be politically liberal and they wanted nothing to do with that, so in the 1960s and 1970s, many evangelicals, who had either been apolitical or more politically moderate, fled political liberalism and progressivism as a part of fleeing theological modernism/liberalism and became Republican in droves. Carter was ultimately rejected by many evangelicals not simply because they suspected his political progressivism but because they rejected his theological liberalism as well (Balmer notes that Carter is not a conservative when it comes to the Scripture, rejecting inerrancy and the like). Part of the problem is seen in the title of the book: "Redeemer." Theological liberals believe ultimately that man redeems himself. Carter saw himself as a sort of societal savior, an honorable man after the dishonor of Richard Nixon. Similarly for Woodrow Wilson, who had perhaps as strong a Messiah-complex as any president that we've had. Man needs a Redeemer who is God and man in one person, to expiate the guilt of his sin and propitiate God's wrath. None but God can bear the awful load of sin. Carter can't redeem and thus he was frustrated as he was cast in an impossible role. Any rulers, in church, state, or family must have a far more modest view of themselves and their offices: the best are but servants of the Redeemer and not the Redeemer himself. Christ will brook no rivals and humbles all those that exalt themselves.

—Alan D. Strange

Karel Blei. *The Netherlands Reformed Church 1571-2005*. Translated by Allan J. Janssen. Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006. Pp. 176. $25.00.

Karel Blei's notable book *The Netherlands Reformed Church 1571-2005*, is a historic volume in Reformed theological and ecclesiological studies. This book is a very important work addressing the history and development of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, and at the point in which this book was written there was no work that existed that covered the history of the Netherlands Reformed Church since Maurice Hansen's work published in 1884. Blei's book was originally published in Dutch (2000), and then in its English version (2005).

Chapter one is an introduction of the general history of the Netherlands Reformed Church, as well as the *Afscheiding* ("Separation") of

1834. Blei explains that there were many differences among Reformed Churches through the history of the Reformed tradition even until today; and historically in Blei's estimation, there have been two types of churches: the *volkskerk* (lit. "people's church") and the "free church." Blei argues that the Netherlands Reformed Church was considered to be a *volkskerk*; however, he argues, these types of churches no longer exist anymore in pure form. Blei also marks the drastic decline in membership in the Netherlands Reformed Church since the early twentieth century, which is a direct result of increased European secularization (or "de-churchification").

Chapter two continues to develop the origins of the Netherlands Reformed Church for the reader. Although highly persecuted by Catholic Spanish authorities who ruled the Netherlands at this time, the newly formed Reformed Church brought their plea before the Spanish king, Philip II, in what later became known as the *Confessio Belgica* (*Belgic Confession*). The Reformed Church in the Netherlands and its scattered congregations united as one official church at the Synod of Emden in 1571, with the Belgic Confession offering them unity and theological identity.

Chapter three is specifically concerned with the Netherlands Reformed Church as a "Public Church" (*volkskerk*). The Reformed Church did not want to be considered a "new" church alongside the "old" Catholic Church. Instead, they viewed themselves as the purified extension of the "true" Church. Blei provides a complete history of the 1578 "Alteration" of Amsterdam, in which Amsterdam was transformed from being a Roman Catholic city to a Reformed city, the military campaigns and political acumen of William of Orange (the Reformed champion who fought against the Spanish crown), the formation of the First National Synod in the Netherlands at Dordrecht, and the creation of the Canons of Dort.

Chapter four begins with a discussion on the philosophical and intellectual climate of the seventeenth century Netherlands. Gisbertus Voetius, a student of the Dutch theologian Gomarus, desired "Further Reformation" of the Reformed Church, arguing that pure doctrine was not sufficient and must be complemented with sanctity of life. The followers of Voetius began to divide the church into various groups or classes of Christians which they labelled as the "reborn" and the "unregenerate." Great theological debate divided the church with some supporting this "Further Reformation," while others claiming it to be an exaggerated emphasis on morality.

In chapter five, Blei outlines the political history of the Netherlands and the shifting of power from the States-General to the National Assembly installed under the new Batavian Republic, resulting in an official separation of church and state. Previously, the Netherlands Reformed Church had been directly controlled, funded and overseen by the Netherlands' government. Shortly thereafter, the

Algemeen Reglement was implemented, which was the first church order for the church that applied to the entire Netherlands Reformed Church; the church order developed at Dort never gained nationwide adoption within the church in the Netherlands. The church would now officially be called the "Netherlands Reformed Church."

Chapter six deals with the immense theological controversies of the nineteenth century between the "moderns" and the "orthodox," which in part was fueled by the new methods of biblical criticism developed in Germany a century earlier. Blei also introduces "Gronigen Theology" which emerged during the 1830s, and asserted in contrast to "Calvinist" theology, that an individual could through the pursuit of holiness, become more and more victorious over sin. The divisive work of Reformed preacher Hendrick de Cock (1801-1842) began to arrive, which caused great division within the Netherlands Reformed Church and contributed to the *Afscheiding* ("Act of Separation") of 1834.

In chapter seven, Blei explains the aftermath of the *Doleantie* and the actions of Abraham Kuyper, its most prominent proponent. Kuyper desired partisanship within the church and his opponent Jacobus Hoedemaker resented the division it created. Hoedemaker desired the church to become the *volkskerk* ("people's church"), which would be defined by its missionary service to the entire populace. The Netherlands Reformed Church suffered major losses in membership during the early to mid-twentieth century, due to a multiplicity of factors including socialism, modernism and division as a consequence of the *Doleantie*.

Chapters eight and nine deal with the Netherlands Reformed Church during the Second World War and afterwards. When World War II had reached the Netherlands in 1940, ecclesiastical party conflicts faded in importance. There was a reinvigoration of the church's "apostolic" purpose in the world that was expressed namely through the formation of a new church order. Blei notes four critical developments of the new church order: a renewed emphasis on the church as *volkskerk*, a concern for the apostolate, the development of a "conversation" between the Reformed Church and the Jewish people, and finally a recommitment to the confessions. During this time, there were many significant developments that took place in the Reformed synods, such as the renunciation of colonial rule over Indonesia (Synod 1956), the condemnation of nuclear weapons (Synod, 1962), and the disapproval of apartheid in South Africa (Synod 1986). The Netherlands Reformed Church was creating a new identity as it entered into the modern world in the middle of the twentieth-century.

Chapter ten covers the history of the church after the year 1970, which was marked by an organizational transition to a less "lofty" and more corporation-like institution, largely in part due to increased secularization within the Netherlands. Beginning in the 1980s the

Netherlands Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, along with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, began a process of reunion, in which all three churches began to seek renewed communion and unity with one another. In December of 2003, the synods of the three denominations met and all agreed on unification, and in the following year the "Protestant Church in the Netherlands" was formed.

In the final chapter, Blei outlines the current identity of the Netherlands Reformed Church (now called the *Protestant Church in the Netherlands*). Blei asserts that the Reformed Church holds strongly to a confessional identity, clinging to the three classical Reformed confessions. The Reformed church's identity is also found in the sacraments, the centrality of the Bible, covenantal theological prominence, and an emphasis on being a *volkskerk*.

This book offers a comprehensive examination of the Netherlands Reformed Church in a succinct, yet meticulous manner. Blei frequently writes in technical jargon throughout the work, which may be cumbersome to the lay reader. He critically evaluates the historical-political environment of the church in the Netherlands, outlines the numerous theological and ecclesiastical disputes and controversies, accents the various influential ministers, theologians and scholars of the Reformed tradition, and traces the development of the Netherlands Reformed Church from its conception until the twenty-first century. This work is a must read for a comprehensive understanding of not only the Netherlands Reformed Church but also the historical development of the Reformed faith and theological tradition.

—Blake Campbell

Craig L. Blomberg. *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions.* Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014. Pp. xvi + 287. $39.99 (cloth).

The doctrine of Scripture is of utmost importance to the Christian church and believers who prize the inscripturated revelation of God that is provided in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. In the modern period, the historic Christian conviction that the Bible is a God-breathed and reliable revelation has been subjected to a variety of attacks, both within and outside the church. Since the time of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the older consensus that obtained throughout the church regarding the Scripture's authority and trustworthiness has dissipated. In the context of modern developments, the language of the Belgic Confession regarding the authority and trustworthiness of the Scriptures does not often find an echo in theological discussions of the Bible. According to this

confession, believers ought to "receive all these books [the canonical Scriptures], and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; *believing without any doubt, all things contained in them* …." (Article 5, emphasis mine).

Due to the ongoing challenges to a robust affirmation of the authority and reliability of the Scriptures, readers ought to welcome Craig L. Blomberg's defense of the truthfulness of the Bible in the face of contemporary challenges. Blomberg, who is a distinguished professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary and an influential theologian among evangelicals in North America, aims in his book to address a number of questions that have recently been posed by critics of the Scripture. In his treatment of these questions, he offers a defense of the reliability of the Bible on two fronts. On the one hand, he defends the reliability of the Scriptures in the face of the kinds of questions that are often raised by critics who want to demonstrate that it is no longer possible to affirm the inerrancy of the Bible. And in the second place, he argues that some of the most conservative defenders of the Bible have unwittingly contributed to a loss of confidence in the Scriptures. In Blomberg's estimation, some defenses of the Bible's reliability are unpersuasive, since they set criteria for the Bible's accuracy that are not themselves true to the kind of book that God has provided the church in the Scriptures.

In his introduction, Blomberg offers an explanation of his approach to the issue of the Bible's reliability. Rather than answer specific charges regarding the historical accuracy and consistency of the biblical accounts of the history of redemption, or claims that the Bible contains ethical and doctrinal inconsistencies, Blomberg chooses to focus upon six questions that play an especially prominent role in recent discussions of the Bible's reliability. These six questions involve textual criticism ("Aren't the Copies of the Bible Hopelessly Corrupt?"), the canon of Scripture ("Wasn't the Selection of Books for the Canon Just Political?"), the proliferation of English translations of the Bible ("Can We Trust Any of Our Translations of the Bible?"), the doctrine of inerrancy ("Don't These Issues Rule Out Biblical Inerrancy?"), the diversity of literary genres among books or sections of books ("Aren't Several Narrative Genres of the Bible Unhistorical?"), and the presence of the miraculous ("Don't All the Miracles Make the Bible Mythical?"). By addressing these questions, which are the focus of much recent literature on the topic, Blomberg wants to demonstrate that, far from leading to a loss of conviction about the Bible's reliability, responsible answers to them are readily available. According to Blomberg, careful reflection upon each of these questions will lead us to see that the case for Scripture's truthfulness is "actually strengthened" (7). Contrary to the claim of recent skeptics that these questions undermine the case for the Bible's trustworthiness, proper an-

swers to them should bolster our confidence that the Bible is completely reliable.

Without attempting to trace out all of the arguments of the book, there are several observations regarding Blomberg's case that I would like to make.

First, in the first two chapters, Blomberg offers a fine summary of the present consensus of evangelical scholarship on the topics of textual criticism and the formation of the biblical canon. Though some recent critics of the Bible's reliability have claimed that textual criticism undermines the reliability of the Bible, Blomberg persuasively argues that this claim is based upon an exaggeration of the number of textual differences among the extant manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments. He also observes that these differences do not materially affect any doctrinal or ethical teaching of the Bible. In a similar way, recent claims regarding non-canonical books (e.g., the gnostic "Gospel of Thomas") have little to commend them. There is no evidence in the history of the church's recognition of the canon that it was motivated by sinister forms of church politics, or that the sixty-six books of the canonical Scriptures were not generally acknowledged among all the leading branches of the historic Christian church.

Second, the two chapters in Blomberg's book that may elicit the most debate are the chapters on English translations of the Bible (Chapter 3) and the "several narrative genres" of the Bible (Chapter 5). In the chapter on English translations, Blomberg presents a clear and helpful summary of the debates regarding the translation of the Bible (he distinguishes "formal equivalence," "dynamic equivalence," and "optimal equivalence" theories, preferring the latter). However, in his comments on the topic of "gender-inclusive" translations, he doesn't adequately analyze the difficulty of striking a balance between retaining the original form of the inspired text and its receptor language. While no general approach to translation is capable of resolving all the problems and challenges confronting the translator, I believe the original text, with all of its historical particularity and specificity, needs to be preserved as much as possible in translation. In the chapter on biblical genres, Blomberg rightly observes that the interpreter of Scripture must attend carefully to the diversity of such genres, and the elusiveness of the category of "historical narrative." He also argues cogently for patience and charitableness in addressing differences of interpretation among biblical scholars who share a high view of Scripture's authority and reliability. However, some of his comments on the narrative of creation in the early chapters of Genesis, as well as the narratives provided in the canonical Gospels, suggest that the range of interpretations he would accept is rather too broad or flexible.

Third, perhaps the best chapter of Blomberg's book is the fourth, which treats the important question of how to define the "inerrancy" of the Bible. Blomberg endorses the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, though he acknowledges that this does not settle all questions of biblical interpretation. The burden of Blomberg's argument in this chapter is that the "inerrancy" or full reliability of the Scriptures requires careful attention to the kind of book the Bible represents. When contemporary standards of accuracy or inerrancy, which may have validity in particular fields of academic study or science, are superimposed upon the Scriptures, one of two consequences follow: either the biblical texts are judged anachronistically to violate contemporary standards of truthfulness, or the biblical texts are squeezed into a straitjacket that does not fit. While contemporary critics of the doctrine of inerrancy often allege that the doctrine "dies the death of a thousand qualifications," Blomberg deftly observes that the number of qualifications are remarkably few in number (four or five qualifications does not equal one thousand!), and that they serve to "clarify" the meaning of the doctrine rather than to undermine it.

And fourth, the weakest link in Blomberg's defense of the Bible's reliability appears in chapter 6. In this chapter, Blomberg tries to defend the Bible's record of God's miraculous activity in the course of redemptive history by appealing to the fact that even today believers throughout the world testify to the continued presence of such miraculous activity. While I do not believe that we are required to deny the freedom of God to continue to act in extraordinary ways (after all, regeneration is, strictly speaking, a miracle), Blomberg is much too sanguine in his appeal to such testimonies. Contemporary testimonies to the miraculous can always be questioned or denied, and no such miracles perform the role within God's purposes that the miracles recorded in Scripture do. Nor should such miracles be adduced as evidence to confirm the validity of the miracles recounted in the Scriptures. Though the topic is too large to broach in a book review such as this, Blomberg's treatment of this question betrays a questionable form of "evidentialism" in the defense of the Christian faith. It also tends to treat all miracles as though they were of equal value in confirming the truth of God's unique revelation of himself in Scripture and in the course of the history of redemption. While Blomberg rejects any distinction between supernatural gifts in the apostolic era of redemptive history and the present, such a distinction is necessary to maintain the unique canonical authority of the self-attesting canon of Scripture (cf. John 20:29; Acts 2:22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4).

Blomberg's defense of the reliability of the Scriptures deserves careful reading. However, these observations imply that his arguments are not always equally convincing. Readers who are interested in following the discussion of the inerrancy of Scripture in the North

American evangelical context, will find Blomberg's book a helpful introduction. But they will also find Blomberg's arguments couched in language that suggests that he has something of an axe to grind. For example, he frequently characterizes his evangelical critics on the right end of the spectrum as ultra-conservative and unscholarly, even responsible for giving cause to opponents of the Bible's reliability to take the position that they do. In doing so, I believe he unnecessarily contributes to the kind of rancor among evangelicals over the topic of inerrancy that he understandably decries.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Walter Brueggemann. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now.* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014. Pp. 89. $14.00.

The title got me. Having to preach through God's law often, I am always looking for new material to help keep things fresh. Also the fourth commandment is not particularly popular today. In our consumer-driven, leisure-seeking society, where we pride ourselves on working hard and playing hard, the idea of Sabbath-rest has all but disappeared!

Walter Brueggemann's book is a thoughtful and provocative challenge to our societies 24/7 relentless drive for achievement and consumption, as he calls us to return to keeping the Sabbath. Sabbath keeping then is a resistance to pressures of our consumer driven society and also provides an alternative way of life. As he puts it himself in the introduction: "In our own contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative. It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are defined by production and consumption of commodity goods. Such an act of resistance requires enormous intentionality and communal reinforcement amid the barrage of seductive pressures from insatiable insistences of the market, with its intrusion into every part of our life from family to the national budget.... But the Sabbath is not only resistance. It is alternative. It is an alternative to the demanding, chattering, pervasive presence of advertising and its great liturgical claim of professional sports to devour all our 'rest time.' The alternative on offer is the awareness and practice of the claim that we are situated on the receiving end of the gifts of God. To be so situated is a staggering option, because we are accustomed to being on the initiating end of things. We neither expect nor even want a gift to be given, so inured are we to accomplishing and achieving and possessing. Thus I have come to think that the fourth commandment on the Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of

the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses…along with anxiety and violence" (xiv).

As this quote makes clear Brueggemann see the Sabbath as a wonderful gift from God to correct the drives, impulses and influences of our culture. He builds his case over six chapters each anchored in specific passages. Chapters One and Six views the relationship of the Sabbath with the First and the Tenth Commandments, taking as his point of departure that the Fourth Commandment is the bridge that connects the other Commandments together. Chapters 2–5 deal with the Sabbath as "Resistance to Anxiety" (Exod. 20:12-17); "Resistance to Coercion" (Deut. 5:12-14); "Resistance to Exclusivism" (Isaiah 56:3-8); and "Resistance to Multitasking" (Amos 8:4-8).

This books helps us to think deep about the gift and the call to enter into Sabbath rest in a culture where its value and restorative power is no longer appreciated. But this is not an easy read. Brueggemann's language is dense and his thoughts are even denser at times. There are also ideas and thoughts that are problematic. An example of this is found in chapter 4 on the Sabbath as "Resistance *to Exclusivism"* where he in light of Isaiah 56:3-8 argues that "Sabbath deconstructs the notion of being 'qualified' for membership," therefore "gay or straight, woman or man, Black or White, 'American' or Hispanic" are all welcome (p. 56). To lump sexual identity and racial identity together in this way is to read our modern politically correct assumptions back into Scripture. Nevertheless, I believe that anyone reading this book with discernment will be greatly challenged to see the value of the fourth commandment as a correction to the "rat race" we find ourselves in!

—Jacques Roets

Richard Burnett, editor. *The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth.* The Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013. Pp. xxviii + 242. $35.00.

Karl Barth is almost universally recognized as the most significant theologian of the twentieth century. His name is mentioned alongside the giants of the theological tradition: Augustine, Thomas, Luther, Calvin, and Schleiermacher. This handbook to Barth's theology is thoughtfully introduced by Richard Burnett, and consists of 229 short articles that explore topics and various terms associated with Barth's thought. The essays in this volume are consistently reliable and ably unpack the important themes that mark Barth's contribution and legacy.

The list of contributors is something of a who's who list of the most able Barth scholars today. The bibliography is also a helpful window into the important literature surrounding Barth's theology.

As a handbook, this volume will prove to be a valuable guide for newcomers to Barth's work; but it is also meaty enough to interest those quite familiar with Barth's project, offering fresh insight into many of his theological accents.

The page format of the book divides the text into two columns on each page. The shorter essays are usually about a single page in length (taking two columns of text). Longer articles span about five to six pages. Among the longer essays the following topics are treated: Church, Creation, Election, God, Incarnation, Jesus Christ, Justification, Perfections of God, Reconciliation, Revelation, Sanctification, Trinity, and Word of God.

The book is designed to enable students, pastors, and scholars to read Barth with understanding. Indeed, there is a learning curve in attempting to grasp Barth's thought, which requires some effort in order to understand his vocabulary, theological method, manner of treating topics, along with a discovery of how interwoven and layered his thought proves to be. Most of the essays in this collection are first-rate, even-handed, and help to render Barth's thick theological program more accessible to those willing to put forth the effort to understand him.

Thus, read and enjoy! But read these essays in order to read and understand Barth himself.

—J. Mark Beach

James T. Dennison, Jr., ed. *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translations*, vols. 1–4 (1523-1693), compiled with introductions by James T. Dennison, Jr. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008-2014. Each volume: $50.00 (cloth).

This is a remarkable work, published over the last half-dozen years, with each of the four volumes running to near or more than eight hundred pages. Though the first two volumes of this were reviewed in this Journal in 2011, which should be consulted for the important matters raised there, the now-completed set is of sufficient importance to merit a final review. Jim Dennison, of Northwest Theological Seminary, has compiled a massive set of all the basic Reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, beginning with the Sixty-Seven Articles of Zwingli (1523) and going through the Baptist Catechism of 1693, commonly known as "Keach's catechism." Many of these documents have never been rendered into English, being available chiefly in Latin or German, and are here published in

English for the first time. We are much in Dr. Dennison's debt and that of his publisher.

Dennison has written introductions for these confessions that give the "historical and bibliographical background" for each entry, though lacking extensive documentation. This lack, and that these are not "critical editions" of these confessions, is readily admitted by Dennison. A variety of translators contributed as well and, as one would expect, the translations vary in quality and clarity. These caveats aside, it is worthy of celebration to have all of these confessions in print in English. Dennison notes that this set is a beginning, not an end, laying the foundation for much more scholarly work on this much-neglected collection of confessions. Indeed, one hopes that critical editions (of the sort that Pelikan provided in the Yale edition on the great Creeds and Confessions of the Church) will follow of the more important, yet hitherto untreated, confessions that have lain dormant.

These confessions are a testament to several things that scholars have noted in recent years concerning the Reformation. First of all, it has been customary more recently for scholars to argue that the Reformation ought properly not to be thought of as singular but as plural (there were a number of "Reformations" not simply a monolithic "Reformation," noted by someone like Carter Lindberg in his recent book, *European Reformations*). And secondly, the plethora of confessions spawned by these Reformations, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, does not mean that these Reformations lacked unity or promoted an unhappy sectarianism. These many confessions have some remarkably unified themes, particularly those having to do with soteriology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (think, justification by faith alone), thus exhibiting a wonderful unity within the diversity.

Though these confessions are many, they reflect also an essential harmony between Calvin (seen in the Gallican and Belgic Confessions, among others) and the Calvinists of the seventeenth century (seen at Dort and then in the "Puritan Confessions," like the Westminster and Savoy). But harmony or unity does not mean uniformity. These confessions show the development in Reformed theology, from those in Zurich and Geneva in the sixteenth century, for example, which contain the earlier expressions of the Reformed faith, to those confessions of the seventeenth century that contain the full-blown federalism of the later period that comes to dominate, even in Geneva (think Turretin and the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*).

Perhaps more than anything, the publication of all these rich, diverse, yet unified documents testify to what Scott Hendrix, emeritus professor of history at Princeton Theological Seminary, has called "Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as Re-Christianization" (in *Church History* 69:3, 558-577). Hendrix argues that, in spite of all the

diversity that has prompted so many to speak only of "Reformations" in the plural, the movement enjoyed an underlying unity, manifested in its impulse to re-Christianize a late medieval Europe that was Christian in name but frequently not very Christian in belief or conduct. Hendrix noted: "Surely this diverse confessional outcome challenges the position that the Reformation was a coherent sixteenth-century movement to rechristianize Europe. The rise of different confessions, however, does not have to be construed as a decline from the original vision of the Reformation as if that vision projected a unified ecclesiastical or cultural embodiment of the early evangelical movement" (*CH*, 573). In other words, the proliferation of confessions at the time of the Reformation does not reflect theological confusion, uncertainty, or diversity-without-unity.

Rather, the movement of re-Christianizing so many of the nations of Europe saw the blooming of many different flowers, all testifying to the rich consequences of such a work of the Spirit. Hendrix argued: "The rise of [so many] confessions can be seen as the structural outcome of the Reformation agenda, which anchored new ways of being Christian in the culture. The faith could only be rerooted, it turned out, in diverse patterns of theology and piety and in different sociopolitical contexts, which we call the confessional groupings of early modern Europe. They become the forms in which that rerooting of the faith was preserved for generations and even centuries to come" (*CH*, 573). That age was a confession-writing age because it was so gripped by the new light brought to the church—salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone as taught in the Bible alone all to the glory of God alone—that it had to give testimony to the faith once for all delivered to the saints in the many expressions that are reflected in the multiple confessions contained within these four volumes now made widely accessible to English readers.

—Alan D. Strange

Ronald Dworkin. *Religion without God.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. Pp. 192. $17.95.

This little book (it's only 6.5" x 4.4") is based on the Einstein Lectures that Dr. Dworkin delivered at the University of Bern in 2011. According to the publisher, "He planned to greatly extend his treatment of the subject over the next few years, but he became ill in the Summer of 2012 and had time only to complete some revisions of the original text before his death in February 2013" (ix). In what has become his last book, Professor Dworkin used the Einstein Lectures to address something that had long been a concern to him: how can one who rejects God still retain all the values that the affirmation of God is

thought to secure? Dworkin does not find theism credible but he also does not find the materialist/naturalist alternative of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchen and the like compelling either. He wants the benefits of religion without what he takes to be the liability of having to believe in God: being bound to incredible supernatural beliefs and to an ancient book containing bizarre and offensive teachings, including dubious ethical imperatives.

Dworkin was Frank Henry Sommer Professor of Law and Philosophy at New York University and Professor of Jurisprudence at University College London, and had taught previously at Yale Law School and the University of Oxford. In other words, this is a man whose scholarship crosses disciplines, and who in a day of narrow specialization comes closer the Renaissance ideal of a scholar. This book deals with science, history, sociology, philosophy and law, appropriate for such a polymath. Dworkin has written scores of books, essays, articles and the like over the years and this book seems to sum up much of what he's been saying—"religion is deeper than God. Religion is a deep, distinct, and comprehensive worldview: it holds that inherent, objective value permeates everything, that the universe and its creatures are awe-inspiring, that human life has purpose and the universe order" (1).

One may here point out that Dworkin is highly aware that atheistic naturalistic materialism of the variety of Dawkins and company does not, and cannot philosophically, rightly affirm these things. He wants these things and is also aware that simply denying them by asserting, for instance, "there is no objective value" or "human life has no purpose," is problematic: to refute such is to support it, since even a negative proposition like "there is no objective value" can be understood if and only if there is objective value. In other words, to assert that all is nonsense, as atheists sometimes do, is self-refuting, since any such assertion presupposes value. Nonsense can only be maintained in a context of sense; to assert that all is irrational requires rationality.

So Dworkin's intent in this book is the ultimate instance of trying to have one's cake and eat it too. He seeks to assert all that religion grants, as noted at the end of the second paragraph, without any of the undesirable aspects of theism, namely, the existence of a Deity and the claims that it entails. Dworkins simply does not find the concept of Deity tenable, i.e., he has no interest or inclination to believe in and obey God, yet he also does not want to give up the sorts of things that normally accompany belief in God and are admittedly missing in atheism.

Dworkin never tells us why the concomitants of religion (like "inherent, objective value" or that "human life has purpose") are desirable, other than to assert that they self-evidently are. I would agree that they self-evidently are, but it seems that I have warrant to do so

since I affirm both that there is a Creator and that He has made us in his image and planted within us as a mark of that image the *semen religionis* so that even the unregenerate, due especially to God's common grace, continue to recognize these good gifts of God (our belief in "values"). Of course, those who deny God have no warrant, given their naturalistic materialistic presuppositions, to affirm "inherent, objective value" or that "human life has purpose." Everyone knows these things because we are all created in God's image, but only the theist can properly account for them. Dworkin is not about to concede that only theists can have these things, which he admits are desirable, but he wants to have them without having to believe in God.

It's not a bad thing, in this reviewer's perspective, to have someone admit that they want the salubrious benefits of religion without the undesirable demands and expectations of religion. So they will simply assert such benefits, like value and purpose, while at the same time denying the God who gives such and makes such possible. This is as clear an instance of a man not knowing what an ox or donkey does (Isa. 1:3) that I've ever seen. Here a brilliant man acknowledges that religion has desirable properties but that the ones that he deems undesirable can be dispensed with so easily and the desirable retained. But if God "goes" then everything goes and it is purely arbitrary and self-willed to insist that religion gives good things if there is no God who makes it all real and truly to mean something.

—Alan D. Strange

Mary Eberstadt. *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2013. Pp. 257. $16.95.

Whether or not secularization has occurred in the West is, and has been for some decades, a matter of debate. This may be surprising to more than a few: surely that the West has been becoming increasingly secular in its outlook and worldview seems a truism hardly worth arguing about. While no one denies that the Enlightenment has brought an end to the Age of Faith, a number of scholars, like Rodney Stark and others, have argued that what has been taken as the death throes of Christianity—think of not only the "death of God" theology of the 1960s but also Harvey Cox's *Secular City* of that same decade, which announced the irredeemable secularization of Western culture—was only growing pains, with recent years witnessing the revitalization of not only Christianity but Islam and other religions. Some would argue, in other words, that burgeoning Islam in Europe,

Christianity in the Southern hemisphere, and the house-church movement in still-officially-atheist China are only three examples that the claim that religion is passé and secularism reigns is overblown.

However, Mary Eberstadt, in her recent book, numbers among those who believe that the West has indeed undergone secularization. Many who have argued the secularization thesis have rejoiced in such as celebrants of secularization. Similarly, many proponents of religion have argued strenuously against secularization. Eberstadt is one of those (and there are a number of them, too) that has both argued the prevalence of secularization in the West in the last two centuries and who deeply laments it. While she examines many of the proposed reasons that the West has "really lost God" and finds many factors contributory, she clearly believes that what has contributed more than anything to the decline of religion in the West is the concomitant decline of the family. She calls this a "new theory of secularization" because, while some have observed that secularization has brought about the decline of the family, no one has clearly argued that the decline of the family has brought about secularization. In other words, Eberstadt's thesis is that the decline of religion in the West has not brought about a decline in the family but rather a decline in the family has brought about a decline in religion.

She starts with a lengthy introduction (3-24) in which she argues that, at least impressionistically, the West has, in some measure, since the late medieval ages, been on a downward slope, the "Sea of Faith" that Matthew Arnold saw ebbing away in his time has only further receded and we are now afflicted with more societal unbelief. In the chapters that follow, she examines "Does Secularization Even Exist?" (Chapter 1), arguing that it does; having established that secularization exists, she then looks at "What is the Conventional Story Line About How the West Lost God? What are the Problems with It?" (Chapter 2), contending that customary answers like the Enlightenment, Science, the World Wars, material progress, and the like don't add up (and she gives reasons why they don't add up); in Chapters 3-5, she looks at what she calls "circumstantial evidence" for the shrinkage of the family as contributing to secularization; and in the rest of the chapters (6-9), Eberstadt explores remedies to the disease that she believes ails us—a diminution of the family in the West in the past century.

There is little dispute that in more recent decades, the West has witnessed a decline in the size of families as parents have had fewer and fewer children. And if the trends continue, there are all sorts of predictions out there about what the failure of those in France, the Netherlands, or Sweden, to give several examples, to replace the dying population will mean in 2050 or 2100. And it is clear to this reviewer that such familial depopulation has occurred alongside secu-

larization. What is not clear is that this shrinkage of the family has caused secularization. It seems as likely to me that the loss of religious convictions has led to the loss of commitment to a robust family. It should be noted that the author is a fairly traditional Roman Catholic (she's commendably candid about this) and that factors both into her view of the whole decline of the West since the Middle Ages (a typical Roman Catholic approach, seeing the Reformation as contributing to secularization) as well as her conviction about the family and its size.

The book is well worth reading, all that having been noted, for its careful examination of the secularization thesis and all the factors contributory to secularization. It seems clear to this reviewer that there has been secularization and it's good to think about that in all its aspects, good and bad: it's good that we no longer, as Rome asserted in the Middle Ages, see the church as over the state, for instance; it's bad that we think that not only can church and state be properly separated (they are properly separated, I contend), but also that God and state can be properly separated, a circumstance neither desirable nor possible. And the shrinkage of the family, particularly the Christian family, and the impact that it is having and will have on the West (what will the "Christian" population of European nations be in 2050 vis-à-vis Muslim population?) is a matter of paramount concern not only for social planners and politicians but for the churches—making particularly interesting, and important, Eberstadt's last three chapters (7-9) on "toward an alternative anthropology of Christian belief," and "The Future of Faith and Family," with interesting alternatives setting for the case for pessimism and optimism.

Though the book's thesis is that the West has really lost God because it's lost a vigorous family commitment and given way to birth control instead of family growth, it's worth reading and pondering deeply, even if one remains unconvinced by the author's particular view of cause and effect, i.e., that family shrinkage has caused secularization. It's surely been a contributory factor and the author establishes that the diminution of the family is a concomitant of secularization. Both secularization and depopulation have occurred and it's good to think about both of them as to their links and consequences. If this depopulation (family shrinkage) involves a kind of failure to love one's neighbor, and I think that it does, the failure to love God is more basic than the failure to love one's neighbor. They are clearly intimately related, but failure to love one's neighbor evidences failure to love God (I John). The reason that secularization of the bad sort—pushing God over into a corner and removing Him from many areas of our lives—has occurred is due to our failure properly to love God. Hearts renewed and reformed with respect to God and His worship will manifest themselves in a greater love to neighbor, which will im-

pact the family. This is what we need more than anything to be restored in the great spiritual losses that we've suffered in the West and to reverse the bad effects of secularization.

—Alan D. Strange

Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald, editors. *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. Pp. xxiv + 616. $49.99 (cloth).

This work epitomizes the understanding that the New Testament documents are historically rooted in the first-century. Contributors repeatedly assert that historical or sociological knowledge of the topics addressed are necessary for properly understanding the New Testament documents. Although perhaps this point is overstated, not many would deny the validity of the importance of the historical roots of the New Testament. Editors Green and McDonald have assembled a world class set of contributors—too many to name—to address topics in which they are proficient.

The book begins foundationally with an introduction by Green and McDonald and a sketch of New Testament chronology by McDonald. The book then falls into five parts. The first addresses exile and Jewish heritage, the second addresses Roman Hellenism, the third addresses Jews in the context of Roman Hellenism, the fourth addresses the literary context of early Christianity, and the fifth provides summary articles on geographical areas relevant for New Testament research. Appendices provide information on money and measurements in the first century, as well as a glossary. Each chapter concludes with an annotated bibliography explaining sources for further research.

Each article averages about ten or twelve pages and most contain pictures, illustrations, or charts. The editors did well not to choose topics that overlap much, so each chapter provides new, relevant information. Newer students will appreciate the relative ease with which these chapters may be read, and the contributors are generally helpful by focusing on primary source evidence more than recent scholarly debates. For example, S. Bartchy's article on slaves and slavery in the Roman world discusses several facts and figures derived from primary source documents, while briefly touching on how older and more recent scholarship has interpreted this evidence. This seems to be the most helpful way.

However, while there is an emphasis on primary source evidence, some biases inevitably arise, albeit only occasionally. For example, McDonald's discussion of pseudonymous writings tentatively suggests that they exist in the New Testament (presupposing some debated letters are not by the stated author) and that this was not a fraudulent practice, but a standard Jewish and Christian practice.

However, he claims the mid-fourth century is when the church started rejecting known pseudonymous writings (375), and that this was "remarkable." But he omits evidence from the second and third century that shows conscious canonical rejection of pseudonymous writings (*Mur. Can.* 64-65; Eusebius, *H. E.* 6.12.3; Tertullian, *De baptismo* 17; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 4.36). Thus, readers should be aware that perhaps not all evidence is presented by the contributors, and that the evidence that is presented is inevitably interpreted via biases, whether good or bad. In line with this issue, one major gap in the book is a discussion of methodology for applying historical data to New Testament interpretation. Students who acquire this background knowledge need to be taught how to apply it and how to discover biases in the interpretation of data so they can make cautious decisions when applying this knowledge to New Testament interpretation. Other biases are evident throughout the book that readers should be aware of, just as the assumption of a late date for the canonization of the Old Testament (after the council of Jamnia [89]), and the acceptance of the evolutionary model of Jahwism when discussing monotheism (79).

Aside from this issue, this work is exceptionally helpful for the beginning student in New Testament. Since each topic is addressed by a scholar proficient in that topic, this book is more specialized than other books that address the same topics but are written by one or two authors. One of the more difficult subjects to grasp, New Testament geography, is addressed at length with a chapter each on Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Cilicia and Cyprus, Asia Minor, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Rome. These chapters are essential reading for understanding the historical nature of Paul's missionary journeys and ministry. Each chapter is full of maps, real-life pictures from the region, and explanation on why the region is important for New Testament investigation.

I would recommend this textbook for use in the classroom, with the caveat that one should be aware of a few biases throughout the book which some may not wish to introduce uncritically to beginning students. This work is probably one of the best of its kind now in print.

—Todd Scacewater

Guenther H. Haas, *The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997. Pp. 205. Price unknown.

Guenther H. Haas, associate professor of religion and theology at Redeemer College (Ancaster, Ontario, Canada), offers this study as a contribution to the developing scholarly interest in the dimensions of John Calvin's social ethics. His book, a revised version of his disser-

tation, argues that Calvin's notion of equity is pivotal for understanding his interpretation and application of justice to the various realms of social life. This study identifies and assesses the oft-neglected historical context and the intellectual and cultural backdrop of Calvin's ethical thought.

Haas divides his work into two parts. Part One, which is comprised of three chapters, offers a concise overview of the historical development and utilization of the concept of equity from Aristotle to the later scholastics, including its use by major Reformers known to have influenced Calvin's thought. Haas begins his historical treatment by identifying the impact of Calvin's formal education prior to his "sudden conversion," by which Calvin developed an acute grasp of Aristotelian ethics, the instruction of the Church Fathers, and scholastic theology and philosophy. Because of Calvin's later training in law, through which he became well-acquainted with Justinian's commentary on Roman law and legal issues, and also due to the broad influence of Renaissance humanism, Calvin was exposed to the concept of equity, defined as the application of the law not strictly to the letter, but with clemency and prudent moderation, and with attention to natural human rights and unique social and ethical circumstances.

As a Reformer, Calvin's ethical thought issued primarily from his commitment to the supreme authority of the Scriptures as the foundational and functional guide for Christian life, though he continued to draw from contemporary humanist scholars as resources for constructing his own theology and ethics. Many early sixteenth century humanist scholars of jurisprudence generally interpreted equity (*aequitas)* not as the general principles of justice (as in Roman law) but in the sense of Aristotle's view of *epieikeia,* the case-sensitive and moderated application of the law. They perceived that natural law (*aequitas naturalis*) was foundational to human law, with equity serving to amend the law's inadequacies (45). Calvin's fellow Protestant Reformers also appealed to natural law (variously conceived) and the norm of equity for interpreting the law in special circumstances, but these are always "guided by the Decalogue and the law of love" (46). Despite the influence of his prominent Reformed colleagues (Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, and Bucer), Haas contends that Calvin's conception and application of equity to ethics made him an "innovator" due to his more thorough and explicit application of the concept compared to his contemporaries (15). Haas concludes that, while various definitions of equity were proposed prior to and during Calvin's sixteenth century context, all of these, in some way, perceived that equity deals with the *interpretation*, rather than the *correction*, of codified law. Equity serves as the "interpretive principle" for justice (22).

Part Two of this study, the six chapters of which make up the core and bulk of Haas' work, offers an examination and assessment

of the place and importance of equity in Calvin's ethical thought. Beginning with chapter four, entitled "Equity, Love, and Justice," Haas introduces what he believes to be Calvin's central doctrine of union or participation with Christ, which is foundational for Calvin's views on the Christian life, and equity in particular (49). Only those who are united to Christ by faith, who have put to death the old nature and its self-serving ways on account of the inward transformation of the Holy Spirit, are capable of practicing equity. Calvin describes equity (*aequitas*) as the interpretive guide by which renewed Christians promote justice in society, especially by showing love to those with unique material and physical needs (60). Thus, he links equity with the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12; "do to others what you would have them do to you"), which is the criterion for fulfilling the Second Table of the Law (50-51). Haas argues that *aequitas*, for Calvin, is a "formal guide," adhering to the express guidance of the Second Table in conformity to Christ's righteous pattern of living (60). In all cases, even when legitimate rights are in conflict, the Golden Rule of love (equity) "is necessary to accomplish true justice" (51). Equity, in this sense, stands above basic "rights," because for the betterment and justice of all involved, one might forego their rights, exercise self-denial, and humbly seek the benefit of others in love, which is an imitation of Christ (59). Thus, the sum of equity, its end goal, is justice. This entails the right order of interpersonal exchange in all levels of society, which is motivated principally by love for God, whose own character and decrees are altogether just and righteous (58). Haas thus concludes, "there is for Calvin an integral relation between love, equity, and justice" (63).

In his chapter on "Equity and the Law," Haas demonstrates how Calvin's concept of equity relates closely to his comprehension of natural law and the moral law in Scripture. Equity is the foundational principle of natural law, which is evident in the general human desire for preserving civil society (relating to the Second Table) (68). Accordingly, Calvin often refers to "natural equity" or the "equity of nature" in relation to the Golden Rule (68). Haas writes, "For Calvin, it is equity, at least in its outward social expression, and the rule of love of neighbour, that are the essential features of the natural law that God implants upon human minds and to which their consciences testify" (69). In Calvin's thought, the equity of natural law functions to interpret the law in general and bring about external compliance to it. The moral law, however, is only accessible to those who have the gift of faith. While the unregenerate person does have a limited understanding of the equity of natural law, implanted in their hearts by God himself on account of his unique grace, "he rejects any view that the genuine root of equity can be understood by the unregenerate mind apart from Christ. Only the believer, united to Christ,

understands it as it is fulfilled in Christ, and can recognize the root of equity manifested in pagan thought and practice" (76).

Haas uses the next two chapters of his study to examine Calvin's concept of equity as the "Harmonizer of Biblical Law" in general, and more specifically as a way to interpret and implement the "Commandments of the Second Table" as a unified ethic for social life. Haas notes that Calvin maintained the substantial unity of the Scriptures on account of the truth that both testaments are conjoined by their central focus on Christ as the fulfillment of God's counsel of redemption and the substance of the law (79). Implicit within Calvin's explanation of the principles of the law, then, is the underlying norm of equity, by which believers fulfill the mandate of love for one's neighbor (Second Table) out of a deeper love for God (First Table), and by which they model or imitate the pattern of Christ who is at the center (end or fulfillment) of all the commandments (83). In Calvin's interpretation of the Second Table, equity serves as the interpretive (rather than corrective) rule for grasping the divinely-ordained principles embedded within the biblical commands and laws. The norm of equity includes a rule of charity (*caritatis regula*) for dealing with matters of submission, mutual protection of persons and property, chastity, and truthfulness (99-101).

The final two chapters of this study explore ways in which Calvin applies the rule of equity to the distinct, yet interrelated, authorities of church and state. Haas identifies Calvin's two kingdoms distinction at work in respect to the function of equity within these unique realms of human life. The church functions according to the law of love in Matthew 7:12, and is prepared for equitable service by the inner working of Christ's Spirit. The rule of equity guides the church towards diaconal service, providing for its pastors, and giving sacrificial service to God within the church and world (115). The state, on the other hand, is most concerned with keeping external order by promoting justice and restraining vice in society. Nevertheless, these kingdoms interrelate, "and they both strive together toward the ultimate goal of love," which necessitates governing with equity (107). Thus, Calvin admits that while the formal nature of the law may change from age to age or among different societies, its norm is to always remain love and equity (109). By way of example, Haas concludes his study with a chapter on "Equity and Usury." Unique among his peers, Calvin was sensitive to the differing social and economic situations in which the lending of money at interest might occur. Rather than condemning the practice outright, he considered it to be neutral and permissible unless proven unacceptable by a want of equity or a charitable spirit on the part of the lender. Thus, says Haas, "it is the principle of equity that allows Calvin to analyze the social and economic realities of his day, that transcends a rigid biblical literalism, and that liberates the Christian conscience" (121).

As Haas suggests in his conclusion, this study indeed offers his readers an abundance of evidence to show that the concept of equity plays an important role in Calvin's economic, social, and ethical thought (123). His description of equity and its various conceptions throughout history leading up to the sixteenth century paints part of the backdrop against which Calvin's own understanding and application of this norm may be set. Haas' work also provides an interesting look into Calvin's exegesis for acquiring a biblical ethic that does not degenerate into a rigid literalistic reading of Scriptural texts, but rather seeks out the principles of God's moral law, which are reflected in the natural law, with sensitivity to the formal diversity of the law's application in varying contexts. While Haas does provide a valuable survey of the intellectual background for Calvin's development of the concept of equity in Part One of his study, this reviewer laments that more was not done to bring Calvin's predecessors and contemporaries, along with their ideas and manuscripts, into Part Two to remain in theological conversation with Calvin and his thought. The author opines that Calvin, unlike his reformed contemporaries, gives equity "a major and extensive role in his exposition of the biblical teaching on the Christian life" (123). This study's lack of sustained and specific interaction with Calvin's reformed colleagues and their writings, however, leaves the reader to wonder whether the author has in fact substantiated that conclusion. Haas appropriately supports his study by drawing from the broad corpus of Calvin's writings, including his *Institutes*, biblical commentaries, sermons, and treatises, though the *Institutes* and commentaries are the dominant sources. In the course of the author's argument, however, the explicit interchange between Calvin's exegetical writings and his dogmatic works, as well as their mutual interpretation, is not always readily apparent. The inclusion of footnotes, rather than endnotes, would help to remedy that inconvenience and show the interconnectedness of Calvin's thought more vividly. Nevertheless, this work has great value for theological students and professionals alike who are eager to develop a more complete grasp of the foundation and application of Calvin's social ethics.

—Timothy R. Scheuers

Douglas F. Kelly. *Systematic Theology: Grounded in Holy Scripture and understood in the light of the Church,* vol. 2: *The Beauty of Christ: A Trinitarian Vision.* Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2014. Pp. 567. Price unknown (cloth).

One of the remarkable developments in recent years is the spate of new systematic theologies that have been published, many of them

written by confessionally Reformed theologians. Although the publication of such systematic theologies always prompts the question whether or not another one is needed, their publication does suggest that the enterprise of seeking to set forth in summary, systematic fashion, the teaching of the Word of God as a whole is still alive and well. In an age of doctrinal illiteracy, this is undoubtedly a sign of continued vitality and theological interest in segments of the churches in North America.

Among these new systematic theologies, Douglas F. Kelly's three-volume *Systematic Theology: Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in the Light of the Church* deserves special notice and attention. Kelly, who is the Richard Jordan Professor of Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, brings unique gifts to the task, which distinguish his work from others in the same genre. Whereas many recent systematic theologies exhibit a desire to summarize faithfully the doctrinal teaching of the Bible, few if any do so with the kind of attention to the history of doctrine, especially in the early or patristic period, as does Kelly's systematic theology. One of the distinguishing features of his work is the thorough acquaintance with and use of patristic sources throughout his treatment of various topics. Throughout his systematic theology, Kelly aims to honor the method and approach that he summarizes in one of the appendices of this second volume: "It is necessary to abide in that community of faith [the church] in order to understand the Scriptures which he [God] provided as the way of salvation, life, and transformation of all things. We cannot make sense of God and the Holy Scriptures as disconnected individuals. We need to be part of the historic (and continuing) Christian Church, with its authoritative summations of saving truth through its various councils, if we are to make sense of God and the verities of his Word" (491).

In this second volume, which has the subtitle, *The Beauty of Christ: A Trinitarian Vision,* Kelly offers a comprehensive treatment of Christology, the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. As his subtitle indicates, he places the doctrine of Christ's person and work within the framework of the biblical revelation of the glory and beauty of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. No topic in Christian theology is more central or basic than the self-revelation of the triune God who reveals his incomparable love in the great event of the incarnation of the Son of God in the fullness of time. Although the three persons of the holy Trinity eternally enjoy the fullness of being and mutual love, which is expressed in the intra-trinitarian relations that obtain between them, the incarnation of the Son of God reveals their gracious purpose to share that love with us, and to ultimately restore purity and beauty to humanity in its fallen estate and to the cosmos as a whole. Following the ancient consensus of the Christian church, Kelly's consideration of the doctrine of

Christ is thoroughly grounded in God's being and action. To use the language of recent Christian theology, Kelly presents without apology a Christology that is "from above" rather than "from below." In the person and work of Christ, the triune God's gracious condescension in the history of redemption reaches its apex and fulfillment.

Consistent with this starting point and framework, Kelly divides his study into three broad sections. In the first, he treats at length the "Trinitarian" context of the person and work of Christ. And then in the second and third sections, he treats the "humiliation" and "exaltation" of Christ.

In the first major section of his work, Kelly's familiarity with the patristic theological tradition is especially evident and helpful. After chapters that review the basic components of the biblical witness regarding Christ's person, which include a consideration of the "names" and "titles" of Christ, Kelly offers an interpretation of several key Christological passages on the incarnation and work of atonement (John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-4; Rev. 5:1-14). The interpretation of these passages provides a summary of the basic biblical building blocks for the early church's confession of the person of Christ in the conciliar decisions of the patristic period leading up to the great Christological statement of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Upon the basis of these biblical passages and others, the church came to confess the "hypostatic union" of Christ, the Son of God, who became man (without ceasing to be God) in the incarnation. In the chapters concluding this section of his study, Kelly's familiarity with patristic theology serves him well, as he carefully makes his way through the thicket of Christological controversy and reflection upon the implications of the church's confession of Christ in the unity of his person and the distinction of his two natures. Some of the material in this part of Kelly's treatment of the person of Christ represents the best, and most well-informed, handling of the subject that I have read in recent literature on the person of Christ.

In the second and third parts of his work, Kelly organizes his treatment of the saving work of Christ as Mediator under the rubric of the states of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. In these sections of his study, Kelly weaves together in a thorough and compelling way the various threads of the biblical witness, the history of Christological reflection, and the major facets of Christ's work of atonement. Since the topic of Christ's work of atonement has been much disputed in recent theological literature, he devotes considerable attention to the defense of the doctrine of "penal substitution" in the face of contemporary criticism. Rather than offering a reductionistic account of Christ's work of atonement, Kelly also emphasizes the theme of Christ's victory over his and his people's enemies in the realization and re-establishment of God's kingly rule over all of humanity and the whole of creation.

Although I have only noted the broad outline of Kelly's treatment of the doctrine of Christ in this volume, what I have noted should be enough to whet the appetite of potential readers and lead them to consider digesting its contents. The strengths of Kelly's Christology are not hard to identify. The subtitle of Kelly's three-volume work is a case of truth-in-advertising: throughout his treatment of Christ's person and work, Kelly aims to expound faithfully the teaching of Scripture and to do so in a way that is informed by the history of the church's interpretation of its teaching. Unlike many evangelical theologies that largely focus upon Scripture but ignore the history of doctrine and contemporary questions, Kelly demonstrates a familiarity with Scripture, the history of doctrine, and the older and more recent literature on the subject. Since the patristic period was a critical period for the church's formulation of the doctrine of Christ's person, Kelly's thorough knowledge of the church fathers serves him well in this volume. For these reasons, I judge this book to be among the best comprehensive treatments of Christology in recent times.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not add a comment regarding a couple of weaknesses in Kelly's volume. As often happens, a book's strength can often be accompanied by a corresponding weakness. In the case of Kelly's approach, this seems to me true of his appeal to patristic and other sources. Many times throughout the volume, Kelly's quotations from sources, especially patristic sources, tends to overshadow or displace his own exposition of a particular topic. On occasion, sections of his chapters consist of a series of quotations strung together. In my judgment, it would be better to limit the number of lengthy quotes that are included in the main body of the chapter, and to relegate some of these materials to the status of a footnote citation. Another weakness in Kelly's study is his tendency to privilege patristic sources in a way that seems to me imbalanced. Although Kelly quotes some Reformed authors often (e.g., Calvin in the Reformation period, T.F. Torrance in the modern period), he tends to overlook others whom you might expect him to quote as well (e.g., Herman Bavinck on several occasions, Louis Berkhof on one occasion, and Richard Muller not once). Surprisingly few of his confessional citations are to the Westminster Standards. This imbalance and shading toward early, patristic sources may also explain the curious absence of any consideration of the important topic of the definiteness or design of Christ's work of atonement. So far as I can tell, Kelly does not address this topic in his treatment of Christ's work of atonement.

Despite these weaknesses, Kelly's exposition of the biblical understanding of Christ's person and work is an outstanding contribution, and deserves to be read for its comprehensive treatment of what

he acknowledges is an inexhaustible topic—God's grace and truth as these are revealed in Jesus Christ.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Colin G. Kruse. *Paul's Letter to the Romans.* The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. 627. $52.00 (cloth).

This mid-length commentary on Romans by Colin Kruse, senior lecturer in New Testament at Melbourne School of Theology in Australia, now replaces the previous contribution to the Pillar series by Leon Morris. In keeping with the design of the series, the volume focuses its comments on the English text of Romans (in this case the NIV 2011) and aims at helping what it calls "serious pastors and teachers of the Bible" (xiv). The volume has an Introduction that addresses standard topics such as author, date, purpose, and text of Romans and also includes sections that give a summary of the letter's content, assess the so-called New Perspective on Paul, and sketch out several theological themes in the letter. The body of the commentary then treats each passage in turn according to passage divisions that, while sometimes debatable, are not at all uncommon. One potentially helpful feature of the volume's format is the presence of approximately 46 "Additional Note" sections peppered throughout the body of the commentary. These offer summaries on topics of interest when they arise in relation to the text of Romans, such as "The Nature of the Homosexual Practice Condemned by Paul," "The Works of the Law," "Predestination in Romans—Corporate or Individual?," or "Hospitality." In general, the theological perspective taken on such topics, and in the commentary as a whole, is conservative. However, Kruse's summary and evaluation regarding debated topics often come across as oversimplifications, both about the complexity of the topics themselves and about the subtleties and even the individual insights of those taking opinions with which he disagrees. In other words, while a reader may ultimately agree with many of Kruse's conclusions, he may not find the discussion that leads to those conclusions especially enriching, provoking a deeper grasp of the subject at hand or even of the rich reasons why his conclusions may be correct.

This observation leads, then, to the question of the volume's overall value, especially for readers of this Journal. Busy pastors often ask what Romans commentaries are best. However, the answer to that question depends much on what one wants out of a commentary. For example, if one wants a volume to depend upon in navigating classic theological questions without false alternatives, which also provides thoughtful exegetical support, John Murray's commen-

tary is still the best starting point and reliable standby for a Reformed reader (*The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* [2 vols; New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965]). By comparison, if one wants something generally dependable theologically that also engages more recent debates (such as the New Perspective) with some nuance, Douglas Moo's more recent offering in the same series is very thorough and erudite (*The Epistle to the Romans* [New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996]). Alternatively, if one wants a bracing interpretative challenge, which is carefully argued but comes from a competing (socially oriented) theological perspective, the magisterial synthesis offered by Robert Jewett is consistently thought-provoking as a sparring partner (*Romans: A Commentary* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). Or yet again, if one wants a commentary that engages the text with both spiritual earnest and insight into application, Martin Luther's seminal work offers both the burning passion of early Reformation fervor and piercing insight into the human heart (*Lectures on Romans: Glosses and Scholia* [ed. H. C. Oswald; vol. 25 of *Luther's Works*; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972]). What is more, behind the four commentaries just mentioned, a dozen others could be commended for particular strengths that cause them to stand out in their own ways. It is within the context of such an embarrassment of riches in Romans commentaries, then, that it is difficult for this reviewer to give Kruse's serviceable work a particularly high recommendation. More than anything, this is simply because other options in a crowded field still stand out as of overall greater and more enduring value.

—Marcus Mininger

A. Donald MacLeod. *A Kirk Disrupted: Charles Cowan MP and the Free Church of Scotland.* Scotland: Mentor/Christian Focus Publications, 2013. Pp. 363. $19.99.

Donald MacLeod, Research Professor of Church History (Tyndale Theological Seminary, Toronto, Ontario) has written a biography of Charles Cowan, one of the major lay leaders of the 1843 Disruption in the Church of Scotland that led to the founding of the Free Church of Scotland. Cowan was a successful industrialist who became a member of Parliament (MP) and a representative of sorts of the Free Church and its interests in the counsels of state. Cowan, in other words, became more identified than anyone else with the Free Church as an MP and used his political power to forward her goal even though the Free Church was not part of the establishment.

MacLeod sympathetically and critically chronicles Cowan's life, family, business, interests, and his civil and ecclesiastical pursuits. Cowan was a man of great passion and commitment, sometimes noble and sometimes simply resolute and unmovable. One of Cowan's more noble commitments was the Sustenation Fund for ministers in the Free Church of Scotland, for which Cowan became the leading lay leader and champion. Leading Free Church minister, and Cowan's relative, Thomas Chalmers had spearheaded the establishment of the Sustenation Committee that oversaw the Fund, whose purpose was to provide all ministers with an equitable salary. The problem that the Fund sought to address was a perennial one: ministers in large churches had more than enough and those in smaller churches often went lacking monetarily. The purpose of the Sustenation Fund was to permit all the church to give so that those in smaller churches would have enough. In other words, the purpose of the Fund was, if not to eliminate salary inequity, to, at least, minimize such, with the ultimate goal of achieving salary parity.

This concern about ministerial salary inequity was not absent from the American scene. Charles Hodge had such a concern, perhaps fueled in part by his Free Church contacts. Hodge was great friends not only with William Cunningham, Principle of the Free Church College, but with many others in the church. Hodge was a staunch supporter of the notion of some sort of Sustenation Fund in the PCUSA. It was so important, in fact, to Hodge that when he preached the opening sermon of the 1847 General Assembly, as was the custom for the moderator of the previous Assembly—he had been the moderator of the 1846 General Assembly—he chose as his text 1 Corinthians 9:14, "Even so hath God ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel," arguing from the text that, among other things, the whole church ought to support its pastors as it did its missionaries. Writing twenty years later about this, when his synod (of New Jersey) was addressing the matter, Hodge noted "one reason assigned for the fact that so many ministers, well qualified for the sacred office, were destitute of regular employment, was the insufficiency of support. Many of them had been forced to leave their fields of labour because they could not sustain themselves and families upon the salaries which they received" (*Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, January 1866, 1).

Hodge argued that leaving the support of churches solely up to particular churches, "cripples the energy of the church, and prevents its progress. Churches begun and cherished for a while are abandoned; promising fields are neglected, and to a large extent the poor have not the gospel preached to them." Have things changed much among us? Hodge continues, "It is the crying sin and reproach of the Presbyterian Church that it does not preach the gospel to the poor. It cannot do so to any great extent or with real efficiency" if the burden

for such must fall solely on the local situation in all cases. "What provision," he plaintively asks, "have we for preaching to the destitute? … Something must be done to rescue our church from this reproach, and to enable her to do her part in preaching the gospel to all people" (*BRPR*, 1866, 4-5).

Now of course we have a version of this in our Home Missions program in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC): OPC church planters receive from both the Presbytery and the denomination support over the first four years or so of a mission work. There is a lessening each year of the amount of support received. However, there are some works in impoverished areas that cannot support themselves after four years. We could continue to support them (and the OPC has done this in some cases) beyond the four years. And in some cases organized churches remain, or may become, so impoverished that they can never pay a minister a living wage. Should we not be willing as a whole church to help out those churches even stateside that cannot help their pastors? What of the congregations in the URC? They are beginning to work together more cooperatively, but hitherto churches have largely only existed in places that can fully support such from their own resources. What is to be done to bring the gospel to those who cannot afford to support a minister among them? What about Reformed churches—OPC, PCA, URC or other NAPARC members—that are established in remote areas with no other Reformed churches around for hours that cannot afford to pay their minister a living wage because they have only thirty or forty members? Such churches cannot combine with another church. Should they simply close?

Perhaps we need something like a sustenation fund now more than ever. Our resistance to such might reflect a church culturally (and economically) captive to capitalism. I realize that this might be thought in missions (home and foreign) to contravene the three-self principle (Venn's and Nevius's insistence that mission churches ought to be self-governing, self-sustaining and self-propagating). But are there not places in the world, including in this country, where the Reformed church needs to go and establish a witness to Christ that may never be able to sustain a minister because of its great poverty? And what of the countryside preacher whose church cannot maintain him? Should we not help? (We do diaconally.) This is not ultimately a diaconal matter, however, because ministers' salaries are not a matter of benevolence, but are that which is owed to him, as the ox that treads the corn is not to be muzzled. If we view the church as a market economy and take a laissez-faire approach, we can easily dismiss such concerns. I am quite sure, however, that our Savior does not intend for us to view his church under this rubric. Cowan in nineteenth-century Scotland did not think so and neither did Hodge in nineteenth-century America. Maybe our model is wrong

in twenty-first century America and we need to be more concerned with supporting all of the church than in continuing to enrich the rich.

—Alan D. Strange

Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson, editors. *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. Pp. viii + 387. $38.00.

For evangelicals, including those who identify themselves as embracing the historic Reformed creeds, this volume is a breakthrough, or a partial one, in the impasse that has long existed between Protestantism of the pre-Enlightenment type, i.e., Christian orthodoxy, and Barth's theology. Not that the rapprochement achieved in this book is entire, nor are the criticisms directed against Barth's thought always enlightening or even accurate. Instead, what this book achieves, for the first time, is a *conversation* between American evangelicals and the theology of Karl Barth.

Why the impasse? Simply stated, Barth's theology doesn't altogether align with classical Christian orthodoxy. As most know, Barth was a liberal pastor, having imbibed liberal theology, who emerged on the scene as liberalism's severest critic. But he defied easy categorization. He seemed to be neither fish nor fowl. Evangelicals quickly judged: if he isn't an orthodox "fish," then he must be a liberal "fowl." Oddly and ironically, Barth was declared a theological liberal by the theological conservatives and a theological conservative by the theological liberals. The term "neo-orthodoxy" was coined as a liberal slur against Barth's project. Meanwhile, others, most notably Cornelius Van Til, branded Barth a new modernist, a theological liberal in conservative disguise (the title of Van Til's first book on Barth was entitled *The New Modernism* [c. 1946; 2nd ed., 1947; 3rd ed., 1972]). If J. Gresham Machen taught the church that there is Christianity on the one hand and liberalism on the other, Van Til would do the same for a new generation: there is Christianity in one corner and its counterfeit in the other, Barthianism (indicative of the title of Van Til's second major study of Barth, *Christianity and Barthianism* [c. 1962; repr. 1977; 2004]).

Many evangelicals have followed Van Til in this assessment, even if they have not read his books on Barth. They caught the gist of his argument: Barth's theology is deadly, "Keep out!" Consequently, in these circles Barth has ever since been summarily dismissed—though Barth certainly bears some responsibility in this regard, due to the difficulty of his style and the voluminous character of his work.

Thus, for most evangelicals, Barth's theology has not seemed worth the effort, especially in light of its apparent unorthodoxies. Besides, when one ventures into the theological waters of Barth's

thought, ignoring the warnings, he or she soon discovers a swamp of strange vocabulary and a methodology swimming with odd arrangements. Nothing seems to track with the usual. It is daunting to take on Barth; his work is massive; and his language and thought-forms require fortitude to master.

This is not to say that there have not long existed different evangelical assessments of Barth's thought. In fact, evangelicals have been divided over the merits of Barth's theology from the start. Gregory Bolich's book *Karl Barth & Evangelicalism* (IVP, 1980) helpfully pointed this out. But it is Van Til's verdict that has carried the day (at least in conservative Reformed circles)—a day that may be ending. The resurgence in Barth studies over the last fifteen to twenty years has ushered in a new era.

The book is divided into three parts: Historical Context—with two essays; Philosophical and Theological Analysis, which has two chapters each on philosophy, Christology, ecclesiology, and universalism (with Barth scholars and evangelicals as contributors); and Contemporary Trajectories—where five chapters are offered, the most intriguing being Bruce L. McCormack's "Afterword: Reflections on Van Til's Critique of Barth."

This volume opens with an introductory essay by Clifford B. Anderson, wherein he offers a brief explanation of each essay in this book. Given his account, I will not venture to do the same here, except to note what I judge to be the strongest chapters in the volume. Perhaps the single most provocative essay in the volume is John Hare's "Karl Barth, American Evangelicals, and Kant." Hare is a specialist in Kant's philosophy, and he shows how both Barth and Van Til misunderstand Kant at certain points. More specifically, Hare persuasively exposes a series of misconstructions of Kant's thought which many evangelicals suppose Kant to have taught, especially the notion that Kant believed humans to be the "ultimate determiners of reality." Hare also demonstrates that Kant doesn't take "autonomy" as "equivalent to creating the moral law." Rather, "autonomy means making the law our own law or appropriating it" (75). Hare offers a Christian reading of Kant that is sure to provoke, and deserves careful reflection and scholarship.

The book is framed by George Harinck's opening chapter, which treats Van Til's context and couches his criticisms of Barth within that context, and Bruce McCormack's "Afterword: Reflections on Van Til's Critique of Barth." Harinck is a specialist in neo-Calvinism, while McCormack is a leading Barth scholar. In many respects, these are the most interesting chapters to read inasmuch as they most directly address the rift that has kept evangelicals away from the theology of Karl Barth. Meanwhile, other essays that deserve mention are those by McCormack and Suzanne McDonald, which each look at features of Barth's doctrine of election (under the universalism head-

ing). McCormack shows that Barth's doctrine of election clearly disallows turning universal salvation into a principle and a necessity, while he also seeks to demonstrate that Barth's construal of the New Testament materials are not without exegetical weight. McDonald argues that Barth's doctrine of election doesn't consistently link up with the work of the Holy Spirit. But it should be observed that, for Barth, such a verdict is premature inasmuch as we must wait to see the final outcome of God's eternal decision and the revelation of the scope of the Spirit's work at the eschaton. Kimlyn Bender shows how Barth has an ecclesiology that could serve American evangelicals, who are rather weak on that doctrine. Adam Neder examines Barth on the hypostatic union. Michael Horton evaluates Barth's actualist Christology, and though he seeks to read Barth with some sympathy and fairness, he essentially repeats Brunner's and Berkouwer's criticisms of Barth. Strangely, however, Horton doesn't engage Barth's own assessment and rebuttal of Berkouwer's analysis of his theology. Indeed, as highly as Barth respected Berkouwer, and regarded him as a theologian with whom to engage, he did not judge Berkouwer to have understood him after all. All the essays of Part Three of this book focus on Barth's thought in relation to contemporary developments in theology, such as the work of Hans Frei, the Emergent church, Radical orthodoxy, and the ethics of Stanley Hauerwas regarding the public square.

The aforementioned essays by Harinck and McCormack (on Van Til) are likely to generate the most comment. Harinck's opening essay, which bears the title "How Can an Elephant Understand a Whale and Vice Versa?" examines the critique that Barth's theology underwent at the hands of Cornelius Van Til, and how that critique, in part, had a kind of precedent in the Netherlands, which Van Til had imbibed and carried forward in his own way. This essay helpfully presents Van Til's theological background and the modernist controversy in America that formed his context, especially with the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

Harinck offers an empathetic reading of Van Til's *unempathetic* reading of Barth, while censuring Van Til at several points. The title of Harinck's essay comes from a letter of Barth to E. R. Geehan, who was editor of a Festschrift in preparation for Van Til. Barth wrote: "The author [Van Til] seems to have understood *not a single word* of all I have written. And certainly I myself have *not* understood *a single word* of his critique. Indeed: how can an elephant understand a whale … and vice versa?" (fn 93, p. 40). Only now has the shrill tone of that time given way to more measured reflection.

If Harinck's chapter is the first thematic bookend of this volume, the last chapter by McCormack forms the closing bookend. Here again Van Til's critique of Barth is squarely addressed, and McCormack offers, much more than Harinck's contextual analysis, pointed

criticisms of Van Til's understanding of Barth's work. McCormack chooses two areas to test Van Til's criticism: Kant's epistemology and the relation of revelation to history, including an evaluation of Barth's alleged distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte.* (In a lengthy footnote McCormack also challenges Van Til's understanding of Barth on divine election.) In short form, McCormack argues that Christology, not philosophy, is where all the issues converge.

Meanwhile, an essay by Darryl Hart defends Van Til against evangelical critiques of his understanding of the famed Swiss theologian. While Hart demonstrates no firsthand knowledge of Barth's theology, he certainly is qualified to comment on Van Til.

This brings us back to the question of rapprochement between evangelicals and Barth's theology. In my view, Barth ought to be read in a manner like we might read the Church Fathers, Augustine or Aquinas or Wesley, or even Scotus or Ockham—with critical discernment and charity, a desire to gain insight, to explore historic Christian doctrines treated in a distinct way in order to separate the wheat from the chaff, and a commitment to understand the context, the wounds and worries, and the biblical understanding that drives a theological project.

It is beyond the scope of this review to explore the critical assessments of Van Til's assessment of Barth. But it must be admitted that under Van Til's tutelage, the conversation between Barth and evangelicals will remain closed. The danger sign remains posted at the entrance to Barth's *Church Dogmatics,* "Keep out!"

It ought not to surprise us that a new generation might want to test Van Til's assessment and explore for themselves the merits and demerits of Barth's project. This volume, *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, offers a genuine way forward.

—J. Mark Beach

James K. Mead. *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. Pp. 336. $30.00.

Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes by James K. Mead is a significant read for not only the biblical scholar but the student and layman as well. "The goal of this textbook …," says Mead "is to make biblical theology—in its historical and methodological complexity—accessible for students," thereby equipping the reader to discern from the "ever-growing number of concepts and proposals" in biblical theology (vii). This book is also a wonderful aid for the study of biblical theology in both the Old and New Testaments.

Mead provides an excellent overview of the history of biblical theology and a thorough examination of its basic issues, methods, and themes. Chapter one serves as an introduction of sorts which tackles the difficult task of defining biblical theology, followed by chapter two

which is a historical survey of the development of biblical theology as a discipline. Chapter two organizes the history of the discipline around seven questions, such as: What did biblical theology look like before "biblical theology" existed as a discipline? Why did the division of the testaments occur? What nineteenth-century intellectual movements influenced biblical theology, and why is the middle of the twentieth-century referred to as the "great age of biblical theology"?

Chapter three discusses eight major issues within three areas of biblical theology that Mead outlines throughout this chapter. These three areas are categorized as pertaining to the overall scope of biblical theology's sources as a discipline, methodological presuppositions, and thirdly the influences that both contexts and communities make on biblical theologians. Within those three categories, Mead discusses such topics as: the relationship between the Old and New Testaments and extra-biblical sources, the unity and diversity in biblical theology, and the relationship of history and theology within biblical theology.

In chapter four, Mead outlines the many methods that are used in the practice and discipline of biblical theology. Mead addresses the components of the most common methods used within biblical theology and reveals the academic and methodological presuppositions behind them. He arranges the methods in chapter four into three major areas in biblical theology: the content, the shape, and the perspectives of biblical theology as a discipline.

Mead in chapter five discusses the themes developed from an examination of biblical theology and the difficulty in their scholarly arrangement. Interestingly, Mead focuses in on two key themes of the entire Bible, and thus biblical theology: Living in a relationship with God, *and* with other human beings. He begins this section focusing on the thematic approach of the unity and oneness of Yahweh in the Old Testament to its fruition in the story of God through Jesus Christ, which is finally confessed by the New Testament church. Mead reveals that he sees the grand themes that were first revealed in the Old Testament as being reaffirmed for Jews and Gentiles (all of humankind), within the New Testament, and sees them as crucial to the thematic understanding of the Bible within the discipline of biblical theology.

Finally in chapter six Mead discusses the prospects for biblical theology in the future. Mead reiterates his definition of biblical theology which he provided at the beginning of his work: "*Biblical theology seeks to identify and understand the Bible's theological message, that is, what the Bible says about God and God's relation to all creation, especially to humankind*" (241). He continues and provides a summary for each of the following five chapters and draws this work to a close.

This book is written in an organized and succinct fashion, offering a clear reading and journey through the history, development, major issues, methods, and themes of biblical theology. Mead's work is the first in quite some time to tackle such a breadth of topics, which include the three main emphases of his book: the *issues*, *methods*, and *themes* of biblical theology. This is a momentous work that provides a foundational understanding of biblical theology which will take the reader on a journey through the history, development, and practice of this critical discipline.

—Blake Campbell

Thomas Nagel. *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. 144. $24.95 (cloth).

Thomas Nagel is a brilliant philosopher at New York University and was a close colleague of the perhaps even more brilliant Ronald Dworkin (whose final book, *Religion without God*, is reviewed in this same volume). They not only shared that beautiful campus there in Manhattan in Greenwich Village and its environs, centering on Washington Square Park, but they shared much ideologically, with both of them finding naturalistic materialism wanting. In this work, Nagel argues that materialism simply cannot account for the world as we know it—an interesting twist on Alvin Plantinga's argument in *Where the Conflict Really Lies.* Plantinga argues that naturalism, rather than supporting science as it is purported to do, actually undermines it (and is thus in conflict with it); theism, on the other hand, which is alleged to undermine science, actually better supports it than does naturalism. Nagel's twist is to agree with Plantinga that materialism, as so many naturalists would have it, is indeed not tenable. He also alleges that theism at least creates as many problems as it purports to solve and that while materialism is deficient as warrant for the world we witness, the answer must lie neither in materialism nor theism but in a third way: something that is within nature but not merely material.

Nagel is doing something in philosophy and science not dissimilar to what Dworkin did in his *Religion without God*: arguing that the mere materialism that leaves us purposeless and meaningless (for how is purpose intelligible in a materialistic world since the very notion of purpose is not something that is material?) cannot account for reality as we experience it. For example, Nagel treats the mind/brain problem and honestly admits that the mind cannot be accounted for on a materialistic basis (see his chapter 3 on "Consciousness"). He also admits that "cognition" (chapter 4) and "value" (chapter 5) cannot be explained if matter is all that there is (again, the assertion of

the reigning paradigm) and this is why, as his subtitle has it, "the materialist Neo-Darwinian conception of nature is almost certainly false." Anyone who knows anything about the current state of academia (as the state of such is depicted in Ben Stein's *Expelled*) knows that Nagel's contention that materialism is philosophically untenable is little short of heresy. In fine, Nagel maintains that no thought of any sort, which means that all of our talking and thinking about these sorts of things, can be accounted for on such a basis either.

Nagel is, in my view, almost wistful in his acknowledgment that the reigning materialism of the day cannot account for the theory of naturalism itself. He admits that theism can account for it, but he finds belief in God something that he cannot swallow, a just-so story, a *deus ex machina* that is outside of nature. Surely something within nature, something that can account for the material and the immaterial, must be what explains it all, even if that something is neither materialistic, nor theistic but a *je ne sais pas* that continues to elude us. Like Dworkin, Nagel will not bow the knee to Jesus Christ. So, while he finds neo-Darwinian thought lacking, he finds Christianity unappealing. He is left to look for a third way, though the way lies right before him. This book is helpful, as is the Dworkin book, with all those who deal with skeptics or even their own hearts. Christianity does not lack for evidence. The reason that folk reject the gospel is not because it is philosophically or intellectually untenable but, like those religious leaders who heard testimony to the Resurrection from the Roman soldiers, they will not have this man to rule over them.

—Alan D. Strange

Reinhold Niebuhr. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, Introduction by Edmund N. Santurri. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013. Pp. xxxii + 244. $30.00.

Why care about a book that was first published almost 80 years ago? Because the perspective presented in this volume, along with the analysis it offers of human moral corruption and the theological solutions proposed in response to our individual and collective brokenness, continue to help the church evaluate itself and its mandate to the world—a world that lies broken in sin, estrangement, and injustice.

Reinhold Niebuhr is best known for his advocacy of Christian realism, with the themes of love and justice forming a dialectic which drives the program. While love forms the motive for social action, justice serves as the instrument of love. However, love and justice (in dialectical interplay) confront a world in which self-interest defies and undermines the dictates of love at every turn (9). Thus, what was

true eight decades ago is still true, and so Niebuhr's work continues to spark interest. Besides that, many consider Reinhold Niebuhr to be the most important American theologian of the last century.

Niebuhr has always been a difficult thinker to label and pin down, for he challenges both Christian liberalism and Christian orthodoxy. He is not a liberal as such, for he despises the moralistic utopianism it promotes, even as he chastises it for sentimentalism, with its naïve optimism about human beings (155). Liberalism simplistically conceives of love as a simple possibility. Niebuhr argues that love is in fact "an impossible possibility" (110). Although divine grace renders love a possibility, to be sure, human sinfulness, human depravity, and humanity's even more sinful collective depravity, make the success of love an impossibility—love therefore cannot find achievement on a social scale.

For Niebuhr, love is not sentimentality; rather, as taught by Jesus, love requires perfect selflessness and total denial of egoism. This disregard for self may reach success to some degree in individual personal relationships, but at the corporate and collective level it proves to be impossible. Collective evil is not only difficult to conquer it finally proves itself impossible to overcome. Liberalism's project, consequently, is misguided and naïve, which means that the legacy of Walter Rauschenbusch and his theology for the social gospel, while commendable in its motives, is ineffectual.

This sober assessment of the human condition does not lead Niebuhr, however, into pessimism—neither concerning person-to-person relationships nor concerning social relations, communal policies and politics, corporate structures, business relations, etc. Since both optimism and pessimism are not options for a Christian ethic, Niebuhr posits his doctrine of Christian realism. Christian *realism*, as used by Niebuhr, is not a species of philosophical realism as such; rather, he uses the term to denote political dispositions, not metaphysical realities. Realism means to take into account all factors in a social and political set of circumstances, specifically the factors of self-interest and power. The ideal of love is not discarded for Niebuhr, but it must confront the reality of collective self-interest and desire for power. Christian realism holds to the idealism of love, that is, a loyalty to moral norms and ideals that combat and negate self-interest. Thus, Niebuhr would have us join the ethic of pure love with rational norms of justice in order to wisely address current cultural injustices and abuses. Love, collectively, is unattainable; but justice, at least levels or degrees of it, is an immediately obtainable goal.

Niebuhr's interpretation of Christian ethics is teleological in orientation, and its method is to use rational demonstration to show the consequences of any given action. Because most ethical situations are beset with moral ambiguities, especially where corporate entities are involved, humility and penitence should mark what we might

count as moral achievements, for our hands are not clean before God.

If Niebuhr is no liberal, neither is he a conservative, for he likewise scores Christian orthodoxy for its pessimism and quietism. Niebuhr observes that Christian orthodoxy rightly asserts that the law of love exposes humans in their corrupted depravity and imperfection, but it fails to derive any significant moral and political principles from this law. Practically, Christian orthodoxy renders love an impossible ideal, an ultimate goal that calls for moral achievement, with justice conceived as a transcendent beyond—a sort of pie in the sky when you die. In this way, the law of love is in part subverted by an absolutistic and blind obedience to immoral and unjust political structures—that is, such structures are accepted as a given. In addition, the law of love is subverted by an adherence to the Stoic conception of natural law, which advocates a blind trust in the reliability of human reason. Human reason, identified with natural law, is believed to establish universal standards of right conduct and action, which are then identified with God's law. Niebuhr argues that the result is to the contrary: the law of love is overthrown and the justice that the law of love advocates is sabotaged (144).

Even more to the point, inasmuch as the orthodox Christian tradition embraced the Stoical conception of natural law, which made a distinction between "relative natural law" and "the absolute natural law," it fell into a trap. As the relative confronts the absolute, the result is that *relative* law vetoes *absolute* law—i.e., the natural law of nations, erecting relative laws (laws established under a doctrine of autonomy) prove more authoritative than divine natural law with its absolutes. Thus, governmental and economic coercion, slavery, and innumerable injustices have been given a divine safe haven—after all, as "natural law" they are the outworking of God's will; in a world of sin they are "necessities."

A split ethic results from this, and Christian orthodoxy sanctions injustice on a social scale, leaving it unchallenged, while advocating a higher ethic within the Christian communion. In this way, this approach makes peace with the contingencies of human sin, and thereby consents to and approves of injustice in the name of natural law. Therefore, notes Niebuhr, it isn't surprising to see the outworking of this legacy, as that natural law tradition was also embraced, as a given, by the German Evangelical Church, which in turn stood complacent and inactive toward, and was even complicitous with, the Nazi movement in Germany, with its totalitarianism (151). "Sanctified injustice" is the result.

As is obvious from this survey of some the features of Niebuhr's interpretation of Christian ethics, his project is still relevant for social-ethical discussions today. His book is provocative and informa-

tive, and if nothing else it offers itself as a foil for Christian thinkers to articulate a proper Christian-social ethics in the current climate.

It should be noted, too, that Niebuhr's book, in this newly published form, is introduced by ethicist Edmund N. Santurri. He sets Niebuhr's work into its historical and theological context and also assesses the viability of some of Niebuhr's positions for theology and ethics today. Santurri is Professor of Religion and Philosophy and Director of the Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives Program at St. Olaf College.

—J. Mark Beach

Cornelius Plantinga Jr. *Reading for Preaching: the preacher in conversation with storytellers, biographers, poets, and journalists.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013. Pp. 133. $14.00.

Books on preaching abound. Most deal with the art of preaching, the mechanics of the preaching process. But here is a book that addresses the preacher from a totally different angle. Plantinga makes his case for better preaching, not through the improvement of the mere mechanics of the art of preaching but through a challenge to the preacher to expand his horizons through reading widely beyond theology. In this age of tricks and gimmicks, where we seek success through minimal effort, you would imagine this to be an impossible task. Hopeless to even try!

Plantinga is aware of the difficulty of his task, because he seeks from start to finish "to present the advantages to the preacher of a program of general reading" (x). In his preface already he lists the following reasons:

> Good reading generates delight, and the preacher should enjoy it without guilt. Delight is a part of God's shalom and the preacher who enters the world of delight goes with God.
>
> But storytellers, biographers, poets, and journalists can do so much more for the preacher. Good reading can tune the preacher's ear for language…strengthen his diction, and stock his pond with fresh, fresh images…
>
> General reading can, moreover, provide the preacher with some of the choicest sermon illustrations in the land…
>
> Above all, the preacher who reads widely has a chance to become wise… (x-xi).

In the rest of the book he expands on and deepens these reasons, as he makes his case. The strength of Plantinga's argument rests not merely on these benefits and the many powerful illustrations to back them up, but also in the elegant language he uses and the unassuming way he argues for his thesis. I would recommend this book mere-

ly on the strength of his writing and the pleasure it provides. But I also appreciate the author's wisdom and the unpretentious way he goes about commending his program. A good example of this is found when he finally sets forth his idea of what would be a doable reading plan for a pastor: "The average minister probably won't read six classic novels in a year, but how about one? Read one great novel a year—or in the case of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, perhaps a novel's equivalent in four or five short stories. One great novel, read slowly enough, with some pondering and with thoughtful notes taken and stored (including notes on possible connections with sermons) will generate treasure. Five years of this and our preacher will have significant riches from five of the best works anybody ever thought to write.

"Just one novel a year? And one biography? And one-fifth of a book of poetry by one poet? And a weekly visit to the website Arts & Letters Daily to find out what the best journalists have been saying?

"Not a bad plan, I think" (42)

Although not everyone will buy into Plantinga's program, I believe that preachers would nevertheless benefit to read him because the book is treasure trove of illustrations, and filled with helpful suggestions on books to read and authors to get to know.

—Jacques Roets

Vern S. Poythress, *Logic* A God-Centered Approach to the Foundation of Western Thought. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. Pp. 736. $45.00.

Books combining theological and mathematical science are not very common; authors that show mastery in both subjects are an especially rare treat. In the subtitle of his book *Logic*, Vern Poythress promises a "God-centered approach to the foundation of Western thought," and he delivers generously in over 700 well-written pages.

The book discusses the basics of logic, informal logic, the Aristotelian syllogism, propositional logic, and predicate logic. Various special topics are also introduced, such as lattices, Boolean algebra, Turing machines, and Gödel's incompleteness theorem. Each topic is introduced clearly, illustrated with many examples, and developed systematically. Exercises at the end of the chapter invite the reader to apply the theory. Complicated details and advanced extensions of various topics are relegated to appendices, which make up nearly one-quarter of the book.

The pedagogic quality of Poythress's *Logic* makes it an excellent textbook for an introductory course in philosophical logic, and it might also find a place in the teaching of mathematical logic.

But the outstanding feature of this text is the thorough integra-

tion of logic and theology. From the foundations of logic to its applications, Poythress consistently connects his subject matter to the Triune God. His transcendental and presuppositional approach places this text squarely in the tradition of Abraham Kuyper and Cornelius van Til. (The author explicitly distances himself from the philosophy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, which he criticizes as "unitarian", as opposed to his Trinitarian approach.)

The great significance of this book, in my opinion, is that it shows what it could look like if the general Reformed principles developed by these men are applied practically and specifically to the science of logic.

However, I am not convinced that Poythress's connection between logic and Trinitarian theology is entirely correct. From the very beginning, he emphasizes that there is a correspondence between the mind of God and human logical thought. Admittedly, man's mind is limited and cannot fully comprehend God; and admittedly, sin has affected man's ability and willingness to pursue logic correctly. Nonetheless, "logic is a person, namely, the Word of God," that is, the second Person of the Trinity (p. 71).

But in this approach, human reasoning has become a way to close the gap between creator and creature. It gives man direct access to the divine mind. I believe that this is incorrect. Even when we "think God's thoughts after him", we do so in a creaturely manner, which is qualitatively different from divine thought.

Poythress anticipates this criticism and gives a sharp counterargument. "Can we say that logic is limited to *this creation* [of man] or to the mind of man? Perhaps it does not manifest the mind of *God*, but only the mind of *man*. — The difficulty here is that, if logic belongs only to man and not to God, God is unknowable. [...] It can sound humble when people say that God lies "beyond" all language and logic. But it is a false humility. In fact, they are claiming to know more than (and other than) what God himself has undertaken to tell us in the Bible. That is arrogance. If they think that God is unknowable, they are producing for themselves a substitute for God." (p. 106-7)

This argument creates a false dichotomy: either man's logic corresponds to God's logic, or God is unknowable. There is a third way, which I believe to be the Biblical answer. Man's logic is qualitatively different from God's logic, yet God is known to man because of his condescension in revelation. His revelation is always accommodated to the mind of man. We know God adequately, not because our logical abilities reach into the divine mind, but because he has spoken his self-revelation within the confines of our human understanding.

Because of this, I tend to view logic as one human endeavor among many others. It gives us access to the created order, which reflects God's glory; it can even be useful to teach us about God from

general or special revelation. But Poythress elevates logic above other activities, as a direct line to God himself. This has several consequences throughout the book; I will address some of them.

Poythress illustrates many aspects of logic using Scriptural examples, and specifically those related to the doctrine of the Trinity. For instance, after discussing the Aristotelian syllogistic pattern known as *Celarent*, he presents the following example: "No words that the Son says are words on the Son's own authority. All words that the Father says are words that the Son says. Therefore, no words that the Father says are on the Son's own authority." Then follows the conclusion: "This syllogism holds because of the harmony among the persons of the Trinity [...]" (p. 212). Now the author is not just saying that the *premises* of this syllogism are true on the basis of God's self-revelation in Scripture. For him the example is not an example but an archetype. The generalized syllogism "No *B* are *C*; all *A* are *B*; therefore, no *A* are *C*," is, in his terminology, a *derived instance* of the Trinitarian relationships.

In my mind Poythress overlooks the fact that our reasoning about God does not involve the divine relationship *in se*, but the revelation of these relationships, as God accommodated them to the human mind. When we apply *Celarent* to the Trinity, our logic is not qualitatively different from applying it to conclude that no dogs are cold-blooded because they are mammals.

In fact, examples based on the ontological Trinity are more troublesome than "secular" examples. The history of the church shows how difficult and inadequate our doctrinal speech is in this regard. Great theologians have admitted that they only "stammer" when employing the language of Three Persons in One Essence. The Trinity is obviously *sui generis*; the Biblical data is scarce; and no vocabulary known to us captures this data perfectly. And while it may well be true that relationships in our world reflect, in some way, the relationships among Father, Son, and Spirit, there is no information in Scripture that allows us to pinpoint the correlation.

Poythress's search for Trinitarian analogies leads him to speculations that, in my opinion, do not hold up under scrutiny. An example is his discussion of Venn Diagrams, which are used to represent logical relationships graphically: "God's truthfulness and self-consistency form the foundation for logic. The indwelling of the persons in one another forms the foundation for spatial realities. Logic and space cohere because God coheres with himself. His truthfulness coheres with the indwelling of persons." (p. 204) I have difficulty accepting this argument, first of all because I am unsure that the indwelling (*perichoresis*) of the three Persons of the Trinity is indeed the foundation of spatiality in the created order; after all, God is not localized. But more importantly, Venn Diagrams do not reveal a general coherence between logic and space. These diagrams interpreta-

tion. He manufactures a tool out of the rich spatial structure of the world, with the express purpose of creating an analogy of logical structure. In other words, God did not create Venn Diagrams, but a spatial world and minds able to construct these diagrams. (Note, by the way, that the used of this tool is necessarily limited. It is impossible to construct a Venn Diagram representing a situation with more than four logical variables.)

A final point of criticism concerns Poythress's solution of the problem of universals, also known as the problem of "the one and the many". How is it possible that the world has a diversity of things (individuals) that nonetheless show a unity of essence (universals)? In line with Reformed apologists such as Van Til, Poythress finds the answer in the Trinity: there is a diversity of divine Persons, yet only one divine Essence.

I object to this analogy for various reasons. First of all, the most basic aspects of individuals and universals do not work for the Trinity. Individuals of one essence have relative independent existence, but the divine Persons are profoundly inseparable. Attributes of individuals may not be predicated of the essence, but individual attributes of Father, Son, and Spirit are often predicated of the Triune God, or even of other Persons.

This analogy also suggests tritheism: if God is a universal and Father, Son, and Spirit are three instantiations of it (as Poythress states on p. 146), then there are three gods rather than one. Even if there were validity to the analogy, one could hardly claim that the problem of the "one and many" is solved; the problem is merely shifted, because we must now ask: why do creaturely instances stand in a different relationship to their universal than the divine Persons to the divine Essence?

Finally, observe that the analogy between the Trinity and "the one and the many" only because of the dogmatic formulation of "Three yet One". Scripture does not use this language; it never ascribes numerical "threeness" to the godhead. The Persons of the Trinity are always specified in their distinguishing functions of Father, Son, and Spirit. Our speech of "Three-in-One" is therefore a *reduction by abstraction* of God's Trinitarian self-revelation. This formulation reflects the church's best attempt to fit this revelation into the categories of universals and instances, of essences and subsistences— and a poor fit it is! Therefore I do not think that this doctrinal language can shed any light on the profound question of "the one and the many".

A final point of interest is the role of *Boolean algebras* in Poythress's book. A Boolean algebra is a generalization of propositional logic and set theory; it may be viewed as the mathematicians attempt to describe the heart of logical structure apart from specifics. Boolean algebra is usually formulated in terms of three operations (corresponding to "and", "or", and "not") that satisfy certain axioms.

We might be tempted to view Boolean algebra as an impersonal explanation of all logical structure. Says Poythress: "Boolean algebra is worse off as an ultimate explanation, because we end up asking ourselves why a seemingly arbitrary set of starting rules [...] has relevance. Why *these* rules rather than others that we could dream up?" And he concludes: "Things *must* be that way because God is Lord over all, not because our own minds are little gods that can legislate for reality." (p. 290)

This is an intriguing question, and I have given it some thought. Again, I believe an answer can be found in the way man goes about his logical enterprise, rather than in the "logical fabric" of the world itself. Boolean algebra reveals the mind of God insofar it reflects the human mind that he created. I cannot spell out the details of my analysis here, but essentially I find that the Boolean algebra structure reflects precisely the fact that we like to reason with independent elements (e.g. propositions) that are two-valued ("true/false"). This principle *explains* the Boolean structure; further details, such as the associativity of the operator "and", are a matter of convenience; for instance, one could define the same structure using the non-associative "Sheffer stroke". Incidentally, any other mathematical structure "that we could dream up" may be represented as a Boolean algebra with additional constraints. These other structures are useful for reasoning in a specific context, such as arithmetic or geometry.

This brief discussion represents only a fraction of the topics dealt with in the book; and, I am sure, only a fraction of the discussions that could be had. One thing is certain: Poythress's *Logic* certainly provides inspiration for profound, and *Reformed*, thinking on logic, philosophy and theology, for novices and specialists alike.

—Arjen Vreugdenhil

T. C. Ryan. *Ashamed No More: A Pastor's Journey through Sex Addiction*. Foreword by Walter Wangerin Jr. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012. Pp. 237. $16.00.

The blurb on the back cover of this book says that "There are some things we just don't talk about. Things like sex, particularly when our sexuality is a matter of personal struggle. Things like the vulnerabilities of our pastors, who must maintain a façade not merely of respectability but of moral and psychological superiority. We don't talk about things that make us feel insecure, that make us feel unsettled. But the nature of spiritual growth, even the story of Christian faith, is a matter of being unsettled from the comfortable compromises we've made and set on a course together toward wholeness and mutually supportive community."

This book, *Ashamed No More*, is ultimately a book about forgiveness, healing, and the triumph of God's grace, but it also spins a sad narrative as the author, Pastor T. C. Ryan, escorts us on a disturbing journey through his lifelong struggle with sexual sin and addiction. Ryan explains that his entanglement with sexual sin predated and subsequently pervaded his pastoral ministry. His remedy—that is, *attempted* remedy—was to wage the battle alone, in secrecy and isolation. He calculated that the consequences of confessing his sin to the church, and seeking help from brothers and sisters in Christ, would be too high. In his isolation he struggled against and perpetually lost his battle with sexual sin, such as internet pornography, and continued to bear his burden alone. This is the sad part of the story.

The victorious part comes in the form of confession, forgiveness, fellowship, and most of all in the gospel of grace which is for sinners like him. Readers will find this book to be a fine resource on several levels. It will embolden and show a path for other pastors who are caught in the deception and destruction of sexual sin. It will inform pastors how they might be instrumental in discipling parishioners who are in bondage to this sort of sin. It will allow churches to face this unsettling topic with an equally unsettling ministry of truth, love, grace and presence that is necessary to help the broken souls in their own churches—hiding, ashamed, secretive, lonely, and probably only slightly aware that they will never muster the spiritual muscle to break free from their cycle of sexual sin.

The book consists of twelve chapters—and most chapters both unfold Pastor Ryan's story and explore the twists and turns of sin and grace. The book also consists of much practical counsel, and demonstrates the need for community. That alone should challenge churches to look again at their "body-life," to evaluate what "communion of the saints" means in their communions, and how *communion* of saints should play out (when it isn't) in their community of faith. Obviously this means that churches must be more than "preaching stations," where we meet and greet and quickly forget about each other.

This sage volume calls all pastors and church leaders, parishioners too, to take off the blinders, to rouse themselves from their slumber, to peel the scales off their eyes and admit that many persons in their churches—including youths and teens—are fighting and losing the battle against internet pornography. Isn't it a form of pastoral malpractice to evade this problem, especially when statistics indicate that the billions spent on internet porn exceed the combined revenues of all professional football, baseball, and basketball franchises, and the combined revenues of ABC, NBC, and CBS? In fact, some statistics indicate that as much as 40% of the adult U.S. population habitually uses porn?

This book argues that there is such a thing as "sex addiction," and the book advocates a version of "the 12 steps" as process for fighting this addiction. Readers may judge for themselves which part of Ryan's narrative and theological perspective most closely resembles their own struggles or experience, or is most in tune to persons with whom, as pastor or friend or family member, you are seeking to help through this dark, shameful tunnel.

In short, Ryan's book offers help and hope for the many hurting and hiding souls that populate our churches.

—J. Mark Beach

Herman J. Selderhuis, editor. *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy.* Vol. 40 of Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, gen. ed. Christopher M. Bellitto. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013. Pp. viii + 689. $277.00 (cloth).

The study of Reformed orthodoxy, which covers roughly the period from the mid-sixteenth century through the seventeenth century, has enjoyed a renaissance in recent years. The older interpretations of this period were often shaped by modern theological agendas and, as a result, the complexity of the theological developments of this period were often miscast and distorted. On the one hand, a sharp contrast was drawn between the magisterial Reformers, particularly Calvin, and the orthodox theologians of the developing Reformed tradition. In this trajectory of interpretation, the topic of "Calvin and the Calvinists" was often a particular focus of study. Many interpreters associated the presumed discontinuity between the early Reformation and later orthodoxy with the claim that later Reformed theology privileged the doctrine of predestination as a governing principle or "central dogma." And on the other hand, the Reformers of the early sixteenth century were interpreted to stand in sharp discontinuity with the late medieval theological period that antedated the Reformation. Rather than treating the Reformers "in context," a number of interpreters, who were often motivated by a desire to find Reformation antecedents of Karl Barth's neo-orthodox theology, sought to interpret Calvin and the early Reformers in a manner that accommodated contemporary theological agendas.

The common thread in this comprehensive study of Reformed orthodoxy is that the orthodox period needs to be subjected to a more historically contextual interpretation. Not only are there continuities between late medieval theology and Reformation theology, but there are also significant continuities between Reformation theology and the developments in its aftermath that occurred in the period of Reformed orthodoxy. Perhaps the most significant interpreter of the period of orthodoxy in modern studies is Richard Muller, whose writ-

ings have clearly had a considerable influence upon the renewed interest in this period. Due to Muller's studies, it is no longer tenable to describe the theologians of the orthodox period as "scholastic," and then relegate them to the status of corrupters of an earlier, more pristine and non-scholastic theological tradition. The historical complexity of the Reformation period and that of Reformed orthodoxy require a far more cautious and sympathetic treatment than was often accorded them by interpreters of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such an approach also requires closer attention to the diversity of theological positions that obtained among Reformation theologians throughout this period.

While it is impossible to provide anything like an adequate survey of the contributions to this substantial volume, a few comments about the content and arrangement of the book will serve to provide some insight into its contribution to the study of the period of Reformed orthodoxy.

After a helpful introduction by the editor, Herman J. Selderhuis, the book is organized into three broad divisions. The first of these divisions, "Relations," contains four chapters that treat the relations between Reformed orthodoxy and the history of research, philosophy, the church, and the patristic tradition. Perhaps the most important essay in the volume is to be found in this section: Willem J. van Asselt's masterful discussion of the history of research on the period of Reformed orthodoxy. Though there are any number of chapters in the book that could be consulted for a treatment of their particular topic, van Asselt's essay provides a helpful entrée into the book as a whole and to its distinct chapters. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, without a careful reading of this essay, many of the contributions of the other authors would not be able to be properly appreciated. The other chapters in this division include fine contributions by Aza Goudriaan ("Theology and Philosophy"), J. Mark Beach ("Theology and the Church"), and Irena Backus ("Reformed Orthodoxy and Patristic Tradition").

The second division of the book is entitled "Places," and treats different geographical regions in Western Europe where Reformed orthodoxy flourished and was particularly influential. Though the authors recognize the trans-national or international character of theology, including Reformed orthodoxy, in this period, they focus upon countries where Reformed orthodoxy made a special impact. The chapters in this division cover Reformed orthodoxy in the Netherlands (Antonie Vos), Germany (Andreas Mühling), Switzerland (Christian Moser), France (Tobias Sarx), Britain (Carl R. Trueman), East-Central Europe (Graeme Murdock) and North America (Joel R. Beeke).

The third division of the book, "Topics," takes a more explicitly theological approach to Reformed orthodoxy. In this division, the au-

thors treat a number of important theological topics that were a special focus of the theologians in this period. The topics include the doctrine of God (Sebastian Rehnman), Christ and Covenant (R. Scott Clark), Scripture (John V. Fesko), Pneumatology (Maarten Wisse and Hugo Meijer), Ethics (Luca Baschera), Predestination (Pieter Rouwendal), and Law, Authority, and Liberty (John Witte Jr.). The selection of such a wide range of subjects, including principal topics in theology, ethics, and politics, reflects the authors' desire to illustrate how the period of Reformed orthodoxy was not preoccupied with one or two main themes to the exclusion of others, or that Reformed orthodoxy can be encapsulated in terms of one "central dogma" to which all the other topics of theology are subordinated.

I list the various contributors and chapters of this volume to illustrate its wide-ranging scope and comprehensiveness. Even though the editor modestly describes the book as a "work in progress" (1), the introduction to the study of Reformed orthodoxy it provides is quite thorough. Readers of this volume will find it a most helpful "companion" to a study of Reformed orthodoxy, even an indispensable aid to sorting out the complexity and richness of its theological developments. The list of contributors, and the diversity of topics considered, amply testify to its value. This value is only enhanced by a comprehensive bibliography of original (many of which are now more readily accessible in edited form) and secondary sources. While such as not to detract from the book's overall value, my only disappointment with it was the discovery of a number of typographical errors and misspellings (especially in the chapter by Rouwendaal).

—Cornelis P. Venema

Herman J. Selderhuis, editor. *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy.* Vol. 40 of Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, gen. ed. Christopher M. Bellitto. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013. Pp. viii + 689. $277.00 (cloth).

Reformed orthodoxy is a growing field of historical investigation. Though this epithet covers the "classic" period of Reformed theology following the end of the Reformation to the late eighteenth century, most scholarly interest has hovered around the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth century. These studies introduce modern readers to hosts of once influential Reformed theologians whose latinized names are no longer familiar to most, but whose (predominantly) Latin theological works shaped Reformed thinking into the early twentieth century. With primary sources now readily available on the internet, this expanding field continues to produce scholarly work and can serve

the church by introducing modern readers to who their forefathers in the faith were, what they said, and why they said it.

The Brill *Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy* is a scholarly introduction to its subject. It will not be easy reading for those without some familiarity with historic Reformed theology. The purpose of Brill's *Companions to the Christian Tradition* is to give readers a semi-comprehensive introduction to the state of scholarship on each topic treated. In his introduction, Herman Selderhuis refers to this present volume as "a midway companion" that should pave the way for more comprehensive research (1). The book treats "relations" to other fields of study (philosophy, the church, and the patristic tradition), "places" (the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, France, Britain, East-Central Europe, and North America), and "topics" (doctrine of God, covenant theology, Scripture, Pneumatology, Ethics, Predestination, and civil law). A scholar with an international reputation for his or her topic writes each chapter. While many of the chapters summarize earlier studies, several of them provide original research and introduce provocative material for further study. The remainder of this review will give precedence to those essays that break new ground.

The first four chapters illustrate well the scope and tone of Reformed orthodox theology. All the authors in the book generally reject the Calvin versus the Calvinists construction that was popular in older scholarship. The first chapter, by Willem van Asselt, brings readers up to speed on the nature of this question. While he does not say anything groundbreaking here, this chapter is exceptionally clear and useful as an introduction to various approaches to studying historic Reformed theology. Aza Gourdian then aptly demonstrates the complex relationship between theology and philosophy in Reformed thought, including the extensive philosophical training that most Reformed ministers received during this period. J. Mark Beach demonstrates how the theology of the schools was translated into the service of the church, largely in light of Reformed catechisms and confessional documents. Irena Backus closes this section by showing the influences of patristic scholarship on Reformed thinking.

The section on "places" primarily includes standard introductions to Reformed thinking in various individual national contexts. While Reformed theology was largely international in character, the politics and culture of various regions sometimes resulted in distinct concerns and emphases. This is particularly evident in France (Tobias Sarx) and Britain (Carl Trueman). Two chapters in this section stand out. Antonie Vos treats Reformed theology in the Netherlands in light of the formation of universities, illustrious schools, and the most significant systematic theologians from this period. His work highlights how and why the Netherlands was highly influential in the realm of Reformed theological education. He shows as well how the theologians in these schools taught their theology in a way that was both

scholastic and practical. Graeme Murdock introduces readers to Reformed thinking primarily in Hungary and Transylvania. This material draws largely on vernacular literature that few have access to. This is a valuable introduction to this oft neglected region of Reformed thinking. Reformed orthodoxy did not flourish in these regions due to the imposition of Catholicism by the Habsburg dynasty. Many clung to their Reformed heritage and resented Catholicism in light of this fact.

The last section ("topics") examines various areas of development in the loci of Reformed theology, with the exception of the last chapter, which treats the influence of Reformed thought on law and politics. Sebastian Rehnman's chapter on the doctrine of God draws from a wide range of Latin works and authors and shows how Reformed writers approached this subject in terms of God's existence (*an sit*), his attributes (*quails sit*), and the Trinity (*quis sit*). This is a useful and compact survey of this subject and it shows why this order was natural and necessary in light of Reformed scholastic methodology.

Maarten Wisse and Hugo Meijer's chapter on pneumatology is particularly noteworthy in terms of original research. They analyze the influences of Augustine, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas on Reformed thinking especially on the work of the Spirit in relation to Christ's humanity. They examine the comprehensive treatment of pneumatology in the work of John Owen, with some attention to the Westminster Confession of Faith and other authors. While some have regarded Owen's treatment of this subject as largely unique, Wisse and Meijer show the patristic and medieval roots of his teaching. In doing so, they simultaneously mitigate the notion of Owenian exceptionalism while recognizing that he wrote the first comprehensive pneumatology perhaps in the history of the western church.

While this chapter is highly valuable, it is marked by subtle inaccuracies in a few places. The most glaring example is that in treating the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the sacraments, they question whether a theology of Christ's "real presence" in the sacrament "makes any sense at all." They do so on the grounds that the Holy Spirit alone makes the sacraments effective through regeneration and that in the Reformed view of the sacraments, "there is basically nothing more than the confirmation of a grace that is present" (511). However, the authors entirely omit the role of faith in coming to the sacraments, which was a vital component in Reformed thought. Moreover, they appear to relegate the Reformed view of grace to the believer's righteous status in his justification. This point deserves fuller interaction than is possible in a review. The Westminster Larger Catechism definition of a sacrament illustrates some of the problems involved in these assertions: "A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to

strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion with one another; and to distinguish them from those that are without" (Q. 162). This statement presupposes a dynamic communion with God in grace that grows and increases through exercising faith. This encompasses the entire order of salvation, which assumes justification and adoption as "grace that is present," but proceeds through sanctification until it reaches its final stage in glorification. Questions 65-90 explain this dynamic relationship of grace in terms of union and communion with Christ in grace and in glory rather than merely a once for all action that requires confirmation only.

Luca Bashera's chapter on "Ethics in Reformed Theology" is noteworthy as well. This chapter examines Reformed ethics in representative dogmatic works, treatises on ethics, and later books devoted to cases of conscience. In light of the Reformed emphasis on intertwining doctrine and practice in true theology, it is surprising that this topic has received so little attention in the secondary literature. Her essay shows the basic continuity in the content of Reformed ethical teaching while showing the wide diversity in organization and methodology.

This book will aid those looking to further their research by tracing the bibliographic details and arguments of its authors. Selderhuis rightly describes it as a "midway companion" to the subject. It provides a useful starting point for serious scholars in this field. The book is not accessible to a lay audience due to its complexity, size, and cost. However, this reviewer hopes that a new generation of Reformed ministers will use books such as this one to understand better what their forefathers taught and, in doing so, to reflect on the formation and meaning of their doctrine and practice. It is only when we know the past accurately that we can interact with it critically and build upon it fruitfully.

—Ryan M. McGraw

John Stott. *Problems of Christian Leadership.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014. Pp. 95. $8.00.

This little book is a gem. The main chapters of this book are based on four talks John Stott gave in 1985 in Quito, Ecuador, which was subsequently published in Spanish, but only now appears in English. In Chapter 1, Stott, working with 2 Corinthians 4, addresses "The Problem of Discouragement" in ministry, seeking to show and encourage pastors in "How to Persevere under Pressure." The next Chapter is very practical, dealing with "The Problem of Self-Discipline." Stott focuses on three areas (the discipline of rest and relaxation, the discipline of time, and the discipline of devotions) as

he shares some helpful insights into "How to Maintain Spiritual Freshness" in ministry. Chapter 3 takes on "The Problem of Relationships" as Stott seeks to show young leaders "How to Treat People with Respect." Working with Colossians 3:17 and 23, he draws two principles that he claims would revolutionize our relationships. This is how he puts it: "According to the first verse, I'm to treat my neighbor as if I were Jesus Christ, but according to the second I'm to treat my neighbor as if he were Jesus Christ. When I behave to somebody in the name of the Lord, I'm to give him the respect and the courtesy which Jesus Christ would give him. But according to the second verse I'm to give him the respect and the courtesy which I would give to Jesus Christ. So in any relationship, Jesus Christ is in both people. I can treat you as if I were Christ, and I can treat you as if you were Christ. Either of them is revolutionary, and the two together are doubly revolutionary" (50).

If we take this to heart and shape our relationships accordingly, it will indeed revolutionize our interpersonal interactions.

The final chapter of this book reflects on "The Problem of Youth: How to Be a Leader When Comparatively Young." Using 1 Timothy 4:11-5:5, Stott expounds the six words of advice Paul gave to Timothy: watch your example (v.12); identify your authority (v. 13); exercise your gifts (v.14); share your progress (v.15); mind your consistency (v. 16); and adjust your relationships (1 Tim. 5:1-2)

The book concludes with a chapter that gives the testimony of "Two 'Timothys'" who were helped and blessed by John Stott over the years. It also includes an appendix with various helpful quotations from Stott's different books on ministry, leadership, and service.

I can highly recommend this book for a quick, encouraging, refresher for all serving in the ministry.

—Jacques Roets

Timothy L. Wesley. *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 273. $45.00 (cloth).

Volumes continue to pour out about the U.S. Civil War as we proceed in the observance of the 150th anniversary of that monumental conflict. Unlike the chronicles of all the doings of the Kardashians, Justin Bieber, and other cultural ephemera, works detailing all that led to, happened during, and followed that War remain not only of great interest to many but of great importance. The Civil War has defined Americans more than any event in the nation's history and can be fruitfully examined from so many sides to mine wisdom in seeking to understand who we are as a people who came from Europe and, thus, have so much in common with it. At the same time, then, as

now, we are also distinct from Europe, especially with so many non-Europeans having come here in the years since the Civil War. The Civil War remains our great watershed: the America that existed before it is very different from the America that came to exist during and, even more so, after it. One of the many changes of this war was the politicization of religion in a way hitherto unknown in the years before the coming of the War (beginning in the mid-1840s). This work has important implications, then, for the question of the relationship of church and state, faith and politics, the spirituality of the church and related concerns.

Wesley's excellent work joins the front-rank of books on religion and the Civil War of recent years, like books by Charles Reagan Wilson, Mark Noll, Drew Gilpin Faust, Harry Stout, E. Brooks Holifield, George Rable and others. Some of these books (ones by Stout, Holifield and Rable, for instance) have been reviewed in the pages of this journal. These books have grown increasingly sophisticated and subtle in their understanding of religion broadly and the clergy, denominations, and the like, more narrowly, on both side sides in the Civil War. It used to be thought that religion, insofar as it played a role in the War, played a supporting role, acting as an auxiliary on both sides for the War effort. This work by Wesley shows that it is was far more messy and complicated than that: religion, and especially the clergy and their denominations, played a leading, and not merely a supporting, role in the War effort, and there were many layers of complexity on both sides.

This complexity manifested itself by clergymen North and South not only taking leading positions in support of their side (Henry Ward Beecher, for instance, leading the charge against secession and slavery in the North; and Benjamin Morgan Palmer, for example, defending slavery as central to the way of life in the South), but also taking positions in opposition to their own side (Henry van Dyke, for instance, acting as an apologist for the South in his Brooklyn pulpit, just down the street from Henry Ward Beecher; and a number of Southern preachers that remained unionists and opposed secession, with some even opposing slavery). Additionally, Wesley tells the story of how preachers and parishioners on both sides fared under occupying forces, particularly how those in the Border States (like Stuart Robinson), who often had Southern sympathy, fared under Northern military oversight (some were denied their pulpit and some went into exile, as did Robinson in Canada).

In telling so large a story, Wesley is bound to make some mistakes. He doesn't get Charles Hodge quite right, for instance, painting him as sympathetic to slavery when, in fact, he was opposed to abolition as threatening disunion, which does not mean that he was uncritical of slavery: he was quite critical of slavery and was a strong proponent of emancipation, though an unyielding critic of what he

perceived to be the radical nature of the abolitionists' agenda. Wesley rightly notes that the 1844 division between the Baptist and Methodist churches that resulted in Northern and Southern expressions of both bodies was due largely to slavery. He speaks of the 1837 division of the Old and New Schools of the Presbyterian Church in the same way, as if it was actuated chiefly by slavery and divided the Presbyterian Church into Northern and Southern branches. The 1837 Old School/New School division did not divide the Presbyterian Church into Northern and Southern branches: the 1837 separation did not have slavery at its center (it was an issue) as much as it did doctrinal and polity divergences. The Presbyterian Church did not divide regionally until 1861, when the passing of the Gardiner Spring Resolution shattered its unity, resulting in Northern and Southern Churches. The Presbyterian Church, particularly in its Old School instantiation, had served, as many testified, as something of the "bond of the Union," as Peter Wallace has ably argued and documented in his 2004 University of Notre Dame dissertation of the same name. The price of keeping the union together, at least for the Presbyterians, was purchased at the expense of the slaves. Though he hated slavery, Hodge, for instance, hated abolition that much more because he feared and opposed, above all, the dissolution of the nation. Hodge and many others like him thought that appeasing the South on the issue of slavery was the price one had to pay for keeping the union together. I argue elsewhere in this Journal (in an article on the spirituality of the church) why Hodge put such a premium on national union. Wesley's minor errors here do not mar his work as a whole, however, and the valuable contribution that it is to this literature.

Once nationhood was gained, Wesley argues, politics and religion were historically kept largely distinct in America, and such separation was deemed proper and desirable. Wesley identifies three historical turns from the mid-1840s to the mid-1850s that changed the equation—the U.S. Mexican War, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854—and "collectively ushered in a new but contested age of political preachers and thus paved the way for wartime disputes over clerical partisanship" (8). This ultimately led to the emergence of three approaches to the relationship between religion and politics, as Wesley details in chapter 5: an approach that emphasized completely "separate spheres" (such as Stuart Robinson took); an approach that emphasized separate duties of church and state, but all under God (the mainstream approach that characterized many, with someone like Hodge falling between it and a separate-spheres approach, though not the radical separation of Robinson); and an approach that seemed to eviscerate any real distinctions between religion and politics, resulting in church and state being merely separate components of an all-encompassing Christian minis-

try (Henry Ward Beecher was a great exemplar of such a view), a view in which all was ultimately politicized.

This rich study is hard to describe. There is much here not yet described (like the particulars of the Confederate Ministry, chapter 6, or Black Church Leaders and Politics in the Civil War, chapter 8, in which the latter did not have the kinds of religion/politics divisions that the white population did) and much that warrants more description ("why Americans feared 'disloyal' preachers," chapter 3, and religious life "under the gun" in both North and South, chapter 7). It does not have a particular axe to grind (perhaps it does in the civil liberties sense, keen to point out how officials North and South violated civil liberties of preachers and parishioners) and treats its subject matter with great fairness. This review is suggestive, unable fully to reflect the breadth and depth of this superb study, which those interested in the religious complexity that changed and prevailed in the U.S. Civil War should take and read.

—Alan D. Strange

N.T. Wright. *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014. Pp. xi + 223. $24.99 (cloth).

N.T. Wright, bishop, biblical scholar, prolific author, provocateur, has once again produced a book (in this case, a collection of essays on contemporary issues) that is destined both to fascinate and infuriate North American evangelicals, the chief target audience of this volume. Here Wright takes up a number of "hot button" issues which divide many evangelical believers today and which form a set of questions that many laypersons ponder and (often silently) struggle to answer. Even if one is unconvinced by Wright's arguments on a new perspective on Paul, or his take on justification, this prolific author ought not to be ignored by those who count themselves in a different ecclesiastical camp than he.

Broadly speaking, in this book Wright treats questions of science and Scripture, social-political-economic concerns, environmental ethics, Christ and culture, as well as modern idolatry, the problem of evil, and issues pertaining to the apocalypse. Wright's aim is to discover how Scripture sheds light and offers perspective on each of the topics considered; more, without saying it, Wright wants us to see that Scripture *surprises* us with its insight and wisdom.

I will highlight some of Wright's discussion in several of the chapters of this twelve chapter book.

In the opening chapters of this volume, Wright deals with the intersection between science and religion, including whether Adam was an historical person. Indeed, he ventures bravely into the thicket of

current debate. Unlike many authors who treat such questions, though, Wright first introduces readers to the nature of modernity, and its roots in ancient Epicureanism. In fact, the Epicurean theme will echo throughout this book in its exploration of the distinct topics. Wright believes it is important to understand more than what is presented in an argument; he looks to what informs and drives an argument, what sort of idolatry creates passion for a form of life and thought. Consequently, the debate about faith and evolution is driven by forces much older than Darwin and modern evolutionary science. In back of the modern project lay the Enlightenment and its adherence to Epicureanism. The result is that science and religion, especially in America, have taken opposing corners like opponents who meet from time-to-time in the center of the ring. Wright points out, however, that while many American evangelicals oppose Darwinism in principle as it pertains to human origins, on the social level they implicitly embrace a social Darwinism, for these Christians are fully committed in their belief that only the fittest survive in the economic jungle, as it should be. This is a great irony: to oppose Darwin when reading Genesis 1 but to be most deeply in thrall to him in the wider application of his theories, especially when applied to social and international policy. Even believers are swallowed up into a new Epicureanism.

Wright argues that the gospel has a legitimate and potent response to the Epicurean menace. Meanwhile, getting back to his take on the relation between science and religion, he bids readers to reconsider what is actually given to us in the opening chapters of the Bible. He argues that the materials presented are "highly poetic," and the interest is not about twenty-four hour periods of time; rather, these narratives have everything to do with the wisdom, goodness, and power of God who made the world. It is striking, he says, that God fashions a world that then makes itself, reproducing and multiplying.

Wright also observes that the Genesis narrative introduces us to the mystery of evil, and the accounts of creation are intended to be read as very different angles of vision into the mystery of life. "The fact that the animals are created before the humans in Genesis 1 and the male human before the animals in Genesis 2 is a classic literary way, perhaps a classic Hebrew literary way, of saying that these two accounts are signposts pointing away from themselves to a third reality that remains unstated, perhaps unstatable" (19). Wright further maintains, following other scholars here, that the ancient world would have understood Genesis 1 as "a story about a god building a *temple*, a place for his own habitation, into which he would of course placed an image of himself before coming to dwell in it, to take his ease there, to be at rest" (20). From here, Genesis 3 offers an account of what has gone wrong with the world and human beings. Alterna-

tive to this account is the Epicurean commitment, which, in the face of this alienation, boldly accepts (or lamely acquiesces) that there has always been a great gap between the gods and the world, and so postulates an ontological versus a moral gap between them. Given that, we must make the best of it, for this world in this condition is all there is. The Christian worldview presents a contrary picture. The creation is God's temple, his own habitation, and humans are those who image himself. There is already a union of the heaven and earth reality. There is no dualism. Genesis 3 depicts what has gone wrong. The New Testament testifies how Jesus ushers in a new creation, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophetic hope. Wright proposes that the way forward in the science versus religion debate is to "look deeply into the four Gospels and their story of Jesus inaugurating God's kingdom," ushering in with this resurrection the first fruits of the new creation (24).

On a very different topic, in a chapter entitled "Jesus Is Coming—Plant a Tree!", Wright waves together themes of the present life and the life to come, life in an inaugurated kingdom and kingdom come, and our pilgrimage and the consummation we await. To awaiting the return of Jesus Christ, living between Christ's ascension and his return, the church has failed to positively and clearly articulate a moral vision for believers in this world. Dualism has filled the vacuum left by this oversight. Says Wright, "… Western Christianity has allowed itself to embrace that dualism whereby the ultimate destiny of God's people is heaven, seen as a place detached from earth, so that the aim of Christianity as a whole, and of conversion, justification, sanctification, and salvation, is seen in terms of leaving earth behind and going home to a place called heaven" (84).

This mistake, reflected in much hymnody and popular preaching, needs remedy. Christ's bodily resurrection is the down payment on a new creation and declares a certain degree of continuity between this life and the life to come, for it declares, too, a kingdom for this earth, a doing of God's will on this earth. The current world of space and time is not a "bad thing" as such, and therefore it is not to be escaped. However, when dualistic theology takes root, why wallpaper the house or "plant a tree"? If it is all going to be knocked down and uprooted tomorrow, why bother with this creation? More concretely, why worry about the environment, given that Jesus will be coming back soon and Armageddon will destroy the present world.

Wright is not arguing for an over-realized eschatology in opposition to this under-realized version. He opts for "a kind of middle ground." From here Wright ably unpacks Romans 8:18-27, the creation-groaning passage. This text does not undermine this life or the creation in which we live our lives. To the contrary, its import demands care for God's good creation, since God will one day renew the whole created order. We seek to reflect the glory of God even now in-

asmuch as we will reflect the glory of God in the renewed creation. Thus, "To deny a Christian passion for ecological work, for putting the world to rights insofar as we can right now, is to deny either the goodness of creation or the power of God in the resurrection and the Spirit, and quite possibly both" (95).

The second part of this chapter treats the Second Coming. Here the watch phrase is, "Jesus is coming, so plant a tree!" Wright seeks to clear away a few misunderstandings. Ephesians 1:10 declares that from all eternity it was God's purpose to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. And Colossians 1:15-20 declares that "all things were created in, through, and for Christ." The created order is not destined to the thrash-heap. These texts, with many others, especially 1 Thessalonians 4, 2 Peter 3, and 1 Corinthians 15:58, each distinctly argue for a continuity model between creation and new creation. In short, "*the resurrection means that what you do in the present matters into God's future*" (105).

Wright doesn't pretend to know how this plays out specifically in the world to come, and he is not arguing that we can build the kingdom of God "by our own efforts, or even with the help of the Spirit. The final kingdom, when it comes, will be the free gift of God, a massive act of grace and new creation. But we are called to build *for* the kingdom" (106). We have a part to play, each of us. Jesus is coming, so go plant some trees.

Wright's book offers insight into "How the Bible Reads the Modern World" versus the more typical reversal of that heading. His chapter on "9/11, Tsunamis, and the New Problem of Evil" is well-executed in examining the most relevant scriptural materials and theological issues. Likewise the chapter on "Idolatry 2.0" further examines Epicureanism which, as noted earlier, is a recurring theme in this book. Wright is not allergic to the term "worldview" and "Christian worldview," and he urges that we grasp and articulate a Christian worldview over against secularism.

Chapter nine of *Surprised by Scripture* treats faith and politics, "Our Politics Are Too Small", which gets at the question of God in the public square. Wright argues that this has been a neglected topic, that it will not go away, that the Enlightenment banned God from public life, that many Protestants have capitulated to this secular philosophy, that Western democracy, being hijacked by the twin tyrannies of secularism on the one hand and of fundamentalism on the other, can hope for little more than a perpetual shouting match. The dualistic division between God and the public world naturally can offer only spin and emotivism. In all this the Enlightenment is eating "its own tail."

Wright contends that God, as Jesus and his ministry are depicted in the Gospels, is a public God. "The central message of all four canonical Gospels—in their very different ways—is that the creator

God, Israel's God, is at last reclaiming the whole world as his own, in and through Jesus of Nazareth" (168). After all, what is it to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven? Jesus is about justice, restorative, healing justice. His kingdom is "God's public kingdom project." In this connection Wright offers a corrective to the often misinterpreted text, "render to Caesar…" (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). Wright also treats Psalm 2 and again draws on Colossians 1. The rulers, even corrupt ones, occupy their positions by God, and also by God can be called to account, confronted, even while they must be obeyed. Romans 13 does not validate every political program that every ruler dreams up; rather, it affirms that God uses them to bring order and even rescue in a disordered world. They, unbeknownst to themselves, anticipate the divine judgment to come and the final mercy. Passivity, quietism, silent acquiescence to any and all forms of political tyranny and political democracy is to deny the church's and the believer's witness in the world. The church is called "to remind rulers of their task, to speak the truth to power, and to call authorities to account" (178). This is no easy task, but doing business with God in public is always complicated"; and "it is never dull" (181).

Many readers will likely find Wright's chapters on "How to Engage Tomorrow's World" and "Apocalypse and the Beauty of God" quite intriguing. The final chapter treats hope under the title "Becoming People of Hope."

No doubt, Wright's book, in taking up contemporary and controversial topics, will generate discussion and debate. Some readers might be put off by his take on "Do We Need a Historical Adam?" (Chapter 2), or his stance on women's ordination (in favor, Chapter 4), or perhaps his refusal to place Jesus and his kingdom in an ecclesiastical box or prayer closet. Others will celebrate his courageous stance to bring out of the closet environmental ethics, his affirmation of the created order in opposition to dualism, and his wise analysis of and commentary on Epicureanism, old and new. Wright offers to the church an agenda for our times and, with that agenda, some new models of thought. He also generates an energy that hopefully will spark us to get busy with the work we are called to do.

—J. Mark Beach