

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

REVIEW: J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: A Doctrine in Contention* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2007). 230 pages. ISBN 9780199211876. \$120. Michael Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). 324 pages. ISBN 9780664231637. \$39.95. Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and the Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2009). 356 pages. ISBN 9781556358654. \$46. Reviewed by Jeff Waddington, teacher of the Calvary Presbyterian Church of Amwell (Ringoos, NJ).

Introduction

While we live in a day and age in which it seems that all doctrines are up for grabs and are being called into question,¹

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1. See Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason, *Reforming or Conforming? Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008) for incisive critiques of the evaporation of doctrinal certitude within the Evangelical movement.

2. For an especially clear statement to this effect, see Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1934) 320.

3. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul*, trans. William Montgomery (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1998).

4. See the work of Guy Prentiss Waters on all three areas, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2004), *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2006), and his chapter, "The Theology of Norman Shepherd," in *The Hope Fulfilled*, ed. Robert L. Penny (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2008) 207–231. Waters is currently working on a full length study of Shepherd which has yet to be given a working title. Waters has also co-edited with Gary Johnson a volume entitled *By Faith Alone* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007).

5. See Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008) 41ff, for his assessment of the "New Perspective on Calvin."

6. I have contributed to this debate with my chapter, "Jonathan Edwards' 'Ambiguous and Somewhat Precarious' Doctrine of Justification" in *Resurrection and Eschatology*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2008) 478–498.

none seems more controversial than the doctrine of union with Christ. Why this is so would seem to call for investigation. After all, the doctrine has been an integral element in Protestant theology for many years. Why is it a problem now? As with so many things, the devil is in the details. That is, while most Protestant systematic theologies contain some sort of formulation of union with Christ (since the concept is biblical), the exact contours of the doctrine and its place within a given system vary greatly. For instance, it is generally recognized that for Lutherans, union with Christ is the *result of justification*. Justification *precedes and remains outside of* union with Christ and *leads into it*.² However, for Reformed theology, union with Christ embraces the whole of the application of redemption so that justification, together with all the other benefits of redemption, occurs *within* union. But even within the Reformed faith there are slightly different articulations of the doctrine of union with Christ and its relation to the redemptive benefits and their accompanying graces.

There is a virtual cottage industry devoted to wrestling with this issue and its related concerns. Not only is the doctrine itself intricate and demanding of firm commitment and careful formulation, but historical circumstances and controversies also color one's perspective on the subject. For instance, in the 19th century, there was debate about the role of union with Christ and its relation to justification in the writings of polymath Albert Schweitzer. In his book *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul* he argued that justification was a "subsidiary crater" in the theology of Paul and that the center of the great Apostle's thought was union with Christ with its participatory nature. That is, union with Christ was all about transformation. The forensic nature of justification was hardly essential. Justification was, after all, a strategic polemical weapon in Paul's arsenal to be used against the so-called Judaizers.³ In more recent times, disputes over union with Christ have arisen because of its relation to controversies involving the New Perspectives on Paul and the Federal Vision, along with the theology of Norman Shepherd.⁴ Some have even contended that there is a "New Perspective on Calvin" in Reformed circles.⁵ And historical theology has not been exempt in these rising and falling controversies. Such stalwart Reformed theologians as John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards have been summoned to the bar of contemporary judgment,⁶ as has Martin Luther in the current "Finnish School" of Luther studies.⁷

I mention the current controversy about the doctrine of union with Christ so as to provide an overarching context for the following review of three of the more recent contributions to this ongoing scholarly and ecclesiastical discussion. The way

7. For one helpful Reformed response to the Finnish school of Luther interpretation, see Carl R. Trueman, "Is the Finnish Line a New Beginning? A Critical Assessment of the Reading of Luther Offered by the Helsinki Circle," *WTJ* 65 (2003): 231–244.

I will handle these reviews is that I will examine each book separately with material description and critical interaction as appropriate and then I will conclude the review with brief comments about how the three books relate to each other and the larger dispute concerning union with Christ. The three books I will be examining are: J. Todd Billings's *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, Michael Horton's *Covenant and Salvation*, and Mark Garcia's *Life in Christ*.⁸

Calvin, Participation, and the Gift

J. Todd Billings, assistant professor of Reformed Theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, has given us a fascinating book with this study of Calvin's doctrine of participation and union with Christ, given as it is, within the context of discussions going on in the larger theological community among so-called "gift" theologians. And among "gift" theologians, it is those within the Radical Orthodoxy school that act as conversation partners in this sophisticated, yet engagingly written work.⁹ Radical Orthodoxy, a movement of primarily British Anglican theologians, seeks to counter the skepticism of postmodernism about metaphysics by going back behind contemporary thought to the work of Thomas Aquinas. In many ways, Radical Orthodox theologians remind me of the Cambridge Platonists, those men who reacted against their Puritan upbringing by embracing elements of Neoplatonism and a strong confidence in the human rational faculty.¹⁰

But why would Billings try to bring together Radical Orthodoxy and John Calvin? The truth is these theologians have already done that for him. His project is in reality an attempt to correct the typical misperceptions of at least some "gift" theologians about John Calvin. For many of these scholars, Calvin is the epitome of what is wrong with Reformation era theologians. Since they look at Thomas Aquinas as the standard by which all others are judged, they come to the conclusion that Calvin falls short of the glory of Thomas. Thomas understood man as created in the garden to be in a continuum with God (the so-called *analogia entis* or chain of being)¹¹ and the goal of man as created was to experience an unmediated beatific vision of God. Redemption is then understood in ontological terms.¹² Salvation *just* is transformation. John Calvin, with his strong Creator/creature distinction, nominalistic tendencies, and stress on divine sovereignty, has no room for reciprocity between God and man. For Calvin, God does all and man, being wholly passive, does nothing. There is no mutual gift exchange, in other words. Billings counters this reading of Calvin with a close examination of his doctrine of union with Christ, and his understanding of divine/human participation which is then traced out in the development of the various editions of the *Institutes* and other writings of the Calvin corpus followed by a careful look at how participation

grows in significance in Calvin's treatment of the sacraments and his understanding of natural law.

With only 197 pages of text, Billings offers a rich, contextualized look at Calvin and his progressively developing understanding of participation. The book contains six chapters which put Calvin in the context of the gift discussion, seek to ascertain his metaphysics,¹³ track the development of his language about "participation in Christ," understand his view of the activity of believers in prayer and the sacraments, and attempt to grasp how Calvin understood natural law as God's accommodation to man so that man might be accommodated to God. All I can do here is touch upon some highlights of Billings' work.

Readers would understand that as a presuppositionalist, I might get a little nervous in the presence of theologians who actually appreciate Thomas Aquinas' theology of the *analogia entis*. It would be dreadful if it turned out to be the case that John Calvin was discovered to hold to this potentially pantheistic or panentheistic belief.¹⁴ But facts are facts. Billings notes that John Milbank¹⁵ sees Calvin's doctrine of imputation as incompatible with a Thomistic doctrine of participation (7–11). But Calvin does use the language of participation. Does he fall into the trap of transgressing the Creator/creature distinction? Billings argues that Calvin is both continuous and discontinuous with the Medieval tradition embodied in Thomas and in later Byzantine thinkers such as Gregory Palamas.¹⁶

An analysis of Calvin's theology of participation in Christ reveals it as a compelling, yet enigmatic, aspect of his theology.

8. Numbers in parentheses in the body of the text are page references to the books under review.

9. The book is not without its critics. Charles Partee, in his *Theology of John Calvin, 175–176*, offers some moderate criticism of Billings at points.

10. See Frederick J. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists: A Study* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1971) and the literature cited therein for more on the Cambridge Platonists. Interestingly enough, Michael Horton in his *Covenant and Salvation* discusses the Cambridge Platonists, especially their putative influence on Jonathan Edwards. See pp. 288–289.

11. For a helpful description of the chain of being, see the citation from Michael Horton later in these reviews on page 263.

12. Ontology is synonymous with metaphysics and has to do with what is ultimately real, what has being, or what exists.

13. See note 12.

14. Pantheism is the belief that God is everything or that everything is God. Panentheism is a slight modification so that God is *in* everything or everything is *in* God.

15. John Milbank (born 1952) is an Anglo-Catholic theologian who serves as professor of religion, politics, and ethics at the University of Nottingham in the U.K. Milbank along with Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock makes up the triumvirate of Radical Orthodoxy.

16. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) served as archbishop of Thessalonica.

It is not Thomist or Palamite, or a straightforward example of 'gift exchange'. Calvin engages deeply with patristic and medieval theologies of participation. Yes, these theologies are radically recontextualized in his theology. Calvin's relation to earlier theological tradition on the issue of participation is a subtle combination of continuity and discontinuity (15).

Billings points out that Calvin departs from the earlier tradition with his doctrine of the *duplex gratia dei* or two-fold blessing of God: justification and sanctification are distinguishable yet inseparable. Justification, on the one hand, is by imputation, not impartation. However, imputation is "inextricably tied" to union for Calvin. Sanctification, on the other hand, is by impartation. And this occurs within the "communal context of the church and sacramental life" (16). The upshot of all this is that for Billings, "... Calvin's theology of participation emerges from a soteriology which affirms a differentiated *union* of God and humanity in creation and redemption" (p. 16, see also 20, 26 and 42–66, especially 61). While it appears that Calvin skates on a razor's edge in his language of divine/human participation, Billings notes that "... Calvin never suggests that humanity is assimilated into the divine" (65).

Readers familiar with disputes about the doctrine of union with Christ will be aware that the forensic nature of justification gets minimized if not altogether eliminated in many instances. One strength of Billings' study is that he clearly recognizes that Calvin affirmed that while justification occurs within union, it is irreducibly forensic in character. While justification and sanctification are inseparable, they are distinguishable. While they are distinguishable, they are also inseparable.

The wondrous exchange as imputation is not simply an externalized transaction that happens outside oneself, thus not requiring true transformation. As Calvin later states it, imputation and regeneration¹⁷ constitute a double grace (*duplex gratia*) and are inseparable.... The wondrous exchange in imputation draws believers into a transforming union with Christ, even as the transformation of believers does not provide the *ground* for this union (71).

Interestingly enough, it appears that for Calvin, the language of participation is not limited to the transformative but also is applicable to the forensic.

Certain passages continue to reflect language of the wondrous exchange: 'You see that our righteousness is not in us but in

Christ, that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ (*Christi sumus participes*); indeed, with him we possess all its riches.' But to ground his very close connection of justification and sanctification—and at the same time the distinction between the two—Calvin emphasizes the oneness brought about by participation. 'For in what way does true faith justify save when it binds us to Christ so that, made one with him, we may enjoy participation in his righteousness (*participatio iustitiae eius fruamur*)?' As in 1536, Calvin's argument is unapologetic regarding imputation. If one denies that we 'participate' in Christ's righteousness and not just our own, one also denies the true union and oneness of believers with Christ (81).

Billings denies that union with Christ is "central" in Calvin's thought. However, the doctrine does have "undeniable importance" (19). Billings continues, "Participation,' along with 'union,' 'engrafting,' and 'adoption,' are central images for Calvin's conception of what it means to be 'in Christ'" (19). Can one use the term "central" and mean by it "undeniably important"? I am not completely sure that there is any substantial conceptual difference between these two expressions, especially if one does not intend to suggest by the expression "central" a central dogma. This reader has not yet found a persuasive argument that central must mean "central dogma." A central dogma serves as the source of doctrinal deductions. No one that I have read who thinks union with Christ is central in Calvin would argue that the rest of Calvin's system of doctrine is directly deducible from the "undeniably important" doctrine of union. So I would suggest that we not trip up over words. I say the doctrine of union is central in Calvin, Billings says it is undeniably important. I think we both mean pretty much the same thing.

Billings also seeks to show that Calvin is a rich theologian who fails to be understood aright in disputes over the nature of union with Christ and the nature of justification.

In general, I see my approach lying between what I consider to be two battling alternatives. First, what we might call an 'Anti-Legal School' of Calvin's thought tends to downplay the forensic elements in Calvin's doctrines of union with Christ and justification, sometimes implying that the organic images of participation, adoption, and engrafting are alternatives to the forensic image of the divine decree. In the other side, some writers emphasize the irreducible legal dimension of union with Christ in justification in a way that may (however unintentionally) imply that the analogy of an external legal decree is sufficient in itself. While scholars on both sides of this divide have legitimate points to make, I argue that Calvin holds a position in the middle: his doctrine of justification, and hence part of his theology of participation in Christ, is unmistakably

17. Calvin uses the word "regeneration" as a virtual synonym for sanctification. However, the term can be used with reference to the initial work of the Holy Spirit as well as his ongoing activity in the life of the Christian.

'forensic,' a righteousness from outside ourselves (*extra nos*) is received both in being united to Christ and simultaneously through God's free and gracious pardon.... On the other hand, other scholars attempt to safeguard this distinctively Reformation doctrine by emphasizing the external nature of the divine decree. In contrast, I argue that one cannot simply label Calvin's doctrine of the double grace (*duplex gratia*) wholly forensic or simply reducible to a non-forensic account of 'union with Christ' (22–23).

With regard to the transformation that occurs within the believer in "regeneration" or what we would call sanctification, Billings suggests that for Calvin, it is an ontological transformation. "Thus, Calvin uses the language of engrafting to argue not only for the intimacy of the union between believers and Christ, but for the actual transformation that happens in this participatory, uniting act of engrafting" (94). It is not clear to me that Calvin's language, as realistic as it is, requires a view of sanctification as ontological transformation. Why can't it be an *ethical* transformation? After all, when Adam fell in the garden of Eden, he did not cease to be Adam. He was transformed from holy Adam to sinful Adam. But he was Adam all the same. So that in Christ, the believer is changed as to his ethical orientation. Undoubtedly more work needs to be done in this area.

Then there is the vexed question of the logical priority of justification to sanctification within union with Christ. This is not a "central" concern of Billings, although he does tip his hand in his discussion. In a section where Billings examines Calvin's relation to and interaction with the problematic Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander, Billings notes that Calvin holds both to imputation and impartation. "First, if salvation is to be truly a gift from God—and sanctification a life of gratitude—a forensic notion of pardon is the necessary prerequisite for such a life of sanctification" (58).¹⁸ Billings is here picking up on what I myself have seen in Calvin. In order to make progress in the Christian life, to grow in the grace of sanctification in its progressive aspect, justification must be a settled issue. Billings reiterates, "In fact, Calvin claims that recognizing God's free pardon in justification is essential for participation in Christ through sanctification—so that the Christian life can be a life of gratitude and voluntary obedience to God" (61). So for Billings, there does appear to be some sort of priority of justification to sanctification in Calvin. However, this priority is with regard to sanctification in its progressive aspect and not its definitive aspect. Those who deny such a thing as definitive sanctification (admittedly a technical expression which does not seem to appear in Calvin, although whether the concept does is fodder for further consideration) still have to admit that progressive sanctification must *start at some particular point* in time. There

is a break with sin in principle. Whether the "settled-ness" of justification constitutes a priority, strictly speaking, over progressive sanctification is the question. I am willing to grant that there may be some kind of priority. Maybe we can say it is an *existential* priority. However, we must remember that the priority is only with regard to the relation of justification to progressive sanctification.

There is also a question about what Billings understands justification to involve beyond the forensic. On p. 114, he notes this: "Hence, in justification, believers become adopted children of the Father, new creations by the Spirit. In this first grace, Calvin is speaking not simply about a legal decree, but about an entrance into a new way of being and acting through union with Christ." And on the same page, in footnote 33 he also says that justification cannot be reduced to a forensic courtroom analogy. Is Billings here confusing all the blessings of union with Christ with the specific blessing of justification? Perhaps so.

Finally, Billings addresses the sticky wicket of Calvin's use of the category of natural law. I already noted at the beginning of this review that Billings sees Calvin understanding law as being God's means of accommodating himself to man so that man may accommodate himself to God. It makes sense, then, that Calvin would see the *tertius usus legis* as the primary use of the law. "Although it is known as the 'third' use of the law, the law's role as guidance for believers is in fact the primary role" (146). Billings goes on to note, "It gains this primary status through its place in Calvin's account of the economy of salvation as creation-Fall-restoration-fulfillment. The negative uses of the law function as they do because of the Fall. The third use of the law, however, is a primal gift from God, what Doweey calls a 'mode of relation' between humanity and God in the prelapsarian state" (146).¹⁹

It is Calvin's position vis-à-vis the idea of natural law that is problematic for many within the Reformed community. As Billings comments, "Concerning natural law, scholars like McNeill emphasize the Thomist tendencies of Calvin's thought, in contrast to Barthian readings which see only a negative use for the natural law. Between these two hermeneutical poles, scholars like Bohatec, Hesselink, Little, Grabill, and Backus have portrayed Calvin as taking a middle-ground position on natural law" (152). What is the problem with the idea of natural law anyway? The standard critique is that it is usually understood to be an autonomous law outside of God

18. Is sanctification *merely* fueled by gratitude? I would agree that gratitude must be a factor, from the human side. However, much more important is the work of the Holy Spirit which is the very basis of the "voluntary obedience" noted in the next citation.

19. Edwards A. Doweey was the author of *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). Billings cites p. 225 of Doweey's work.

to which even he must conform. It is also a wax nose in the secular world. Historically natural law has been whatever anyone wanted it be. But there are two questions at play here: what did Calvin hold and what is the theological assessment of Calvin's view? This is true for the overall discussion of Calvin and union with Christ as well. There is a tendency to allow our theological assessment of the concept of natural law to control what we see Calvin saying or not saying. Billings (and others like Stephen Grabill in his *Rediscovery of Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics*²⁰) see Calvin embracing a modified natural law.

So what does Calvin mean by natural law? Billings says,

... when Calvin speaks of the natural law, he is frequently speaking of the 'internal law' (*lex interior*) which is 'engraved upon the hearts of all.' Although this law is written on the human heart, human understanding of this law is greatly tarnished from the blindness and sin resulting from the Fall. What is the content of the 'internal' law? The 'internal' law, although perceived imperfectly, is the same as the 'moral law,' which is 'the true and eternal righteousness, prescribed for all nations and times, who wish to conform their lives to God's will.' The content of the moral law is summed up in the Decalogue, which can be fully understood only in light of Christ and the double commandment to love God and neighbor. Thus the 'moral law' is also part of the 'natural law,' even though humans have imperfect access to this natural, moral law apart from revelation (153).

It seems that natural law for Calvin is a form of general or natural revelation. However, the way Billings states it at the end of the immediately preceding citation may be a bit confusing. Natural law is a form of revelation. Perhaps Billings means by "revelation" special revelation?

For Calvin, according to Billings, natural law corresponds to the moral law or the Decalogue. The Decalogue, of course, has two tables. The first table refers to man's relationship to God and the second to man's relation to man. With the fall man is not able to please God by living a life of *pietas* but still has vestiges of understanding the first table that renders him inexcusable before the face of God. And man has knowledge of the second table. It is this that accounts for civilization.

20. Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovery of Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics*. Emory University Studies in Law and Religion series. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

21. The other volumes in this series are *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), and the final volume *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

... Calvin gives a paradoxical and quite original reading of Romans 1:18–32, arguing that natural knowledge of God is offered by God but not received. The blindness resulting from the Fall keeps the natural knowledge of God (related to the first table) to a minimal content: that God exists and that God is a judge.... However, the second table of the natural, moral law is a different story. Although fallen humanity has a distorted view of the second table until they have received God's revelation, humans nevertheless have an innate knowledge of good and evil that is reasonably reliable (154).

Once again, Billings sounds like he is reading Calvin as if natural law was not a form of revelation. That would be strange. Does Calvin really think men just read natural law off of creation by their own wits? This is hardly likely. It is given to men by God. It is revealed by him. So it would appear that factually, Calvin embraces a form of natural law. Theologically it looks like what we have called natural or general revelation.

I have not been able to delve as deeply into these issues as they demand. But I trust the reader has gotten an idea of the quality of the work in Billings' book. We have questions about some things, but overall, the book has been well worth the effort expended. We will return to further consideration of *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift* in the conclusion.

Covenant and Salvation

Now we come to the second volume of our literary trilogy on union with Christ. Michael Horton provides us with a veritable theological feast in his *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ*. The third of a four part series, this volume covers what we would typically refer to as the application of redemption.²¹ As with the other volumes in this series, Horton enters into detailed dialog with conversation partners from other theological traditions. In this case, the partners are primarily scholars in the New Perspectives on Paul school and the Finnish School of Luther interpretation (Helsinki Circle). Also, as with the other volumes, Horton attempts to bring the best of post-Reformation Reformed scholasticism and the more recent redemptive historical (i.e., Biblical) theology of Geerhardus Vos into the conversation as well. All of this makes for a rewarding and enjoyable theological discussion.

Covenant and Salvation's 324 pages is comprised of twelve chapters divided into two main sections: covenant and justification and covenant and participation. Beginning with the first chapter, Horton has provided a fascinating discussion of the various kinds of covenants that one finds in Scripture. The author points out that we find covenants of law and covenants of promise. These are also known in the literature as suzerainty treaties and royal grants respectively (2). This distinction provides the background for the second chapter of the book where Horton distinguishes between the covenants of Sinai

and Zion building off of Paul's discussion in Galatians 3 and 4. More specifically there is a clear demarcation between the covenant of promise which God made to Abraham in Genesis 12ff and the covenant of law made with Israel at Mount Sinai.

In chapters three and four Horton enters into focused dialog with exemplars of the New Perspectives on Paul, specifically E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright. These chapters contain some of the best interaction with the NPP advocates from a biblical and systematic theological vantage point. In the second chapter Horton interacts with Sanders's covenantal nomism idea and meticulously demonstrates that when Sanders ascertains that Second Temple Judaism was gracious and therefore not legalistic or Pelagian, Sanders fails to note that, like medieval Roman Catholicism, Second Temple Judaism was quite likely semi-Pelagian and therefore legalistic after all. In the fourth chapter the author interacts with Dunn's thesis that "works of the law" in Paul's letters were not just any works done to merit God's favor but specifically "ethnic boundary markers": Sabbath keeping, kosher diet, and circumcision. Horton, building on the insights of others such as Stephen Westerholm,²² amply demonstrates that works in Paul were not limited to these boundary markers although they certainly included them.

In the fifth chapter, "Law and Gospel: Contrast or Continuity?" Horton presents his form of the republication thesis.²³ Arguing against the common assumption that the Law/Gospel distinction is a specifically Lutheran abstraction, Horton notes

No less than Lutheranism, the confessions and formative theologians in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed churches strongly affirmed the law-gospel distinction. However, as federal theology flourished, the Reformed drew this distinction into the ambit of the various historical covenants. So, for example, specific questions such as to what extent the theocracy was a republication of the covenant of creation (and therefore, strictly speaking, a covenant of works) or the way the law functions in the Abrahamic as opposed to the Sinaitic covenants introduced more nuance (80–81).

What exactly is this republication thesis? In broad strokes it is the idea that the Mosaic administration was a two-layered covenant. That is, it was an instantiation of the covenant of grace in terms of personal eschatological salvation. Old Testament saints were justified by grace alone through Christ alone by faith alone just as much as New Testament saints. However, additionally, there was a national, typological works-oriented aspect to the Mosaic covenant as well. This layer of the covenant was meant to box Israel in until the coming of the Messiah (per Galatians 3 and 4). The physical blessings of possession of the holy land would be based upon obedience to the law as a people. This can be seen in the example of Daniel

and his compatriots Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These were godly Hebrews who found themselves in an ungodly land because of the exile. The Israelite people were punished by removal from the land, and among them were godly Jews. Daniel was personally saved but he still experienced national exile.²⁴ In other words, those who went into exile were a mixed group of the elect and non-elect in Israel.

In the sixth chapter the author addresses the nature of justification as the imputation of Christ's active and passive obedience. Here Horton interacts with N. T. Wright's recent criticisms of the traditional understanding of justification and his own creative alternative.²⁵ Wright criticizes the traditional Reformed doctrine of justification for misunderstanding Paul. Recalling the language of Sanders about covenantal nomism being about getting in and staying in the covenant, Wright notes that justification is not about getting in to the covenant community but about who is already in. As he says, it is not so much about soteriology as it is about ecclesiology. For Paul, Wright contends, instead of the boundary markers in the church being ethnic badges such as Sabbath observance, kosher diet and circumcision, now the badge is faith. Additionally, Wright contends that "the righteousness of God" noted by Paul in Romans 1:17 is not the righteousness imputed to those who trust in Christ but is God's covenantal faithfulness. Horton notes

Yet again Wright is refuting a position that confessional Lutheran and Reformed traditions do not hold. None of the Reformers taught that *God's righteousness* is imputed, although the one who fulfilled the terms of the law-covenant as the human servant is also the divine Lord. A third party, a representative, is left out of the courtroom in Wright's description.

22. Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). Westerholm has recently revised and substantially expanded this work in his *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran Paul" and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

23. A fuller explication of the republication thesis can be found in the recent publication, *The Law is Not of Faith*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko and David Van Druen (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2009). See also Michael Brown's essay, "The Covenant of Works Revisited: John Owen on Republication in the Mosaic Covenant," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 4 (2008): 151–161.

24. Those readers who are familiar with Puritan theology should see an analogy here with the national covenant idea embraced in the old and new worlds. The national covenant was seen to relate to God's blessings on the nation apart from personal salvation.

25. Wright has offered his criticisms and creative alternative in his *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), his commentary on Romans in the *New Interpreter's Bible: Vol. 10/ Acts-First Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 2002), *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), and most recently in *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2009).

There is only a judge/plaintiff (God) and the defendant (Israel). However, Christ is both, and this complicates the picture. In fact, the mature Reformation doctrine of justification was articulated against both Rome's understanding of justification as an infused quality of righteousness and Andreas Osiander's notion of the believer's participation in God's essential righteousness. The Reformers and their heirs labored the point that it is Christ's successful fulfillment of the trial of the covenantal representative that is imputed or credited to all who believe. His meritorious achievement, not God's own essential righteousness is imputed (104).

Justification, which involves the forgiveness of sins and acceptance as righteous, according to Horton, is not a legal fiction. "In Christ as Lord-Servant, God's faithfulness to the covenant and human faithfulness to the covenant finally and fully converge. Yet it is the covenantal obedience that he has 'worked out' in his earthly trial that serves as the content of imputation. This is what keeps justification from being an abstract or legal fiction, since the justified do in fact possess 'in Christ' the status of those who have perfectly fulfilled all righteousness" (104–105). However, Horton is not quite clear here as we will soon discover. What I mean is that Horton, as the two part scheme of his book reveals, does not include justification *within* union with Christ. Even though he has just noted here that justification takes place "in Christ" it is not clear to me what he means by this expression. As much as I hate to say this, Horton offers us what looks like a basically Lutheran *ordo salutis* here.

Horton is right on target as he addresses Wright's idea that there is both a present justification by faith and a future justification based upon the believer's whole life lived. Horton responds to this undermining of the finality of justification in this life by saying, "While I would agree that the law gives life in one sense—namely, in pronouncing its vindication of Jesus in the resurrection, this is true for us only by covenantal

participation in Christ. Justification is indeed a final judgement on 'the entirety of the life lived,' as Wright suggests, but a judgement on Christ's life lived rather than on the believer's" (122).

Horton's second part of the book begins his discussion of union with Christ proper. As already noted, justification appears to occur *outside of* and *lead into* and *undergird the whole of* union with Christ. This makes sense if we assume that union with Christ is primarily or fundamentally transformative. That is, if we conceive of union with Christ as basically sanctification then we would want to preserve the forensic nature of justification by removing it from within the parameters of union with Christ. This Horton seems to do. But is that Reformed or something else? In the seventh chapter Horton argues that justification is "the forensic basis of union with Christ and is therefore the source of our calling, sanctification, and glorification" (129). He continues, "In this understanding, justification is not simply one doctrine among others; it is the Word that creates a living union between Christ, the believer, and the communion of saints" (138). In this sentence it seems pretty clear that the justifying Word *creates* union. It would seem to make no sense to say that justification occurs *within* union and at the same time be the *source* of that union.²⁶

Tying justification in history to the eternal plan of the Triune God in the covenant of redemption, Horton draws upon the work of Kevin Vanhoozer and speech act theory. Here the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is said to ground speech act distinctions between locution, illocution, and perlocution (135).²⁷ The point of all this is that speech is seen to "yield its effect" or bring about what it says. Just as when the minister utters "I now pronounce you man and wife" and in the very utterance the deed is accomplished, so also when God declares a sinner justified he is so. This is one area where Horton provides a suggestive nuance to traditional justification doctrine. However, we shall soon see that there is more here than initially meets the eye.

In chapter eight Horton discusses Neoplatonic participation or *metathesis* (153–180). In this chapter the author covers some of the same territory as Billings by interacting with Radical Orthodoxy as well as the Finnish school of Luther interpretation. Here Horton offers an alternative to Radical Orthodoxy's participation with his covenantal *koinonia*.²⁸ There is, then, a covenantal form of participation which involves one being either in Adam or being in Christ (164). Radical Orthodoxy, like Roman Catholicism, views grace as a substance that can be infused into someone as over against understanding grace as God's favor extended to us in the face of our sinfulness. As Horton notes,

While Reformation theology understands grace as God's verdict (*favor*) and a gift (*donum*) of a new life, Milbank restricts grace to the latter and treats it as an infused substance. At the

26. A similar confusion arises in John Fesko's *Doctrine of Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2008). I have raised a concern about this confusion in my review of Fesko at <http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/justification-understanding-the-classic-reformed-doctrine.php>.

27. These technical terms derive from the discipline of speech act theory. A *locutionary* act is an utterance. An *illocutionary* act is the utterance's intended meaning. A *perlocutionary* act is the intended or unintended effect of the utterance. Horton builds off of the work of Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2002). However, speech act theory finds its seminal articulation in the writings of J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) and John Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

28. *Koinonia* is the Greek word for fellowship or communion.

heart of the notion of an infused grace lies an ontological dualism, which assumes that there is a substantial deficiency in nature that must be supplemented by grace. In Reformed theology, however, grace justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies creatures without adding anything substantial to their nature (169–170).

This seems quite right.²⁹ The Bible sees man's fall in terms of *ethical* rebellion, not in terms of *substantial* deficiency.

Here Horton also addresses the Finnish school of Luther interpretation regarding Luther's early understanding of union with Christ.³⁰ The upshot of the Finnish school's reading of Luther is that it reads Luther through the lens of the repudiated theology of Andreas Osiander. Osiander, who was opposed to Melancthon's forensic understanding of justification, taught a *justification-by-means-of-union-with-Christ-in-his-essential-divine-righteousness*. Because we will be discussing Osiander in relation to Calvin in the third segment of this review, we will keep our comments brief. Horton seems to be on solid ground when he says, "While it is quite possible that Osiander developed a full-blown theology of substantial union in part from some statements in Luther's earlier writings, it seems fairly clear that Luther's mature teaching was decisively opposed to any attempt to find a righteousness *in us* (even that which one had by virtue of union with Christ) that could stand in the divine judgment" (179).

In the ninth chapter Horton presents his alternative to Neoplatonic metaphysics, covenantal koinonia. Horton grants that his covenantal ontology will be less sophisticated and speculative than the alternatives (182), but it is a biblical alternative all the same. It is at this point that Horton offers a useful critique of the Neoplatonic chain of being or *analogia entis*. Participation is a very biblical idea, but is that inasmuch as it is covenantal participation and not an ontological fusion. Horton unpacks for us the problem with this arcane and pervasive idea.

Especially through Origen and the Alexandrian school (with roots in Philo), Christian theology was influenced by the notion of the cosmic ladder of being, with lower forms of existence participating in higher forms, deriving ultimately from the absolute. Creation, in this scheme, is an emanation (for Origen, eternal) of divinity from the one God reaching all the way out to the extremities of being. Specific scriptural teachings challenged or qualified aspects of the metaphysical heritage, but the worldview was essentially that of Middle Platonism, Stoicism, and Neoplatonism (184).

Horton is not challenging the legitimacy of metaphysics (ala Kant), but arguing that the kind of metaphysics we

embrace must be consonant with Scripture. One can only offer a hearty amen to such sentiments.

However there is a fly in the ointment. Horton wants to eliminate the concept of the infusion of habits. The Reformers were correct to dismiss this idea from the realm of justification. But to dispense with the idea altogether seems problematic to me. I will readily grant that Horton knows that he is plowing new ground here. Here we get to the heart of his covenantal metaphysics. Moving away from the Reformed tradition regarding regeneration and sanctification, Horton calls for a rejection of the infusion of gracious habits altogether. In its place Horton calls for the understanding of justification as a declarative speech act providing the basis for the other benefits of redemption that form part of the *ordo salutis*. Horton believes that the infusion of gracious habits is a residue of the Thomistic notion of salvation as overcoming substantial deficiency. Before further interaction, let's get a hold on what we are talking about.

The Christian church has more or less adopted an Aristotelian metaphysics of human nature. This may be good or it may be bad, but to ascertain *that* we must know what it is we are judging. I am not convinced that this way of understanding human nature is *completely* wrong. The Reformed Scholastics didn't think it was wrong, nor did Old Princeton.³¹ So what does this view of human nature entail? According to this model, human nature (and I am using "nature" here in a broad sense as we will soon see that we also use the word in a narrow sense) is comprised of three elements: the substance of humanity, the external acts or humanity and *intermediate* habits.³² As I noted at the beginning of this essay, when Adam fell he did not become something else. He remained Adam. However, he changed from being holy Adam to being sinful Adam. What was it that changed? I would argue that the fall was *ethical*. That is, what was corrupted or changed was not Adam's substance. Nor was it the case that mere external acts changed. What the fall corrupted was what has been called the *habit* or *disposition*. Another way of putting this is that when Adam fell, his ethical orientation changed, not the substance of who he was. Instead of being holy and oriented towards God, he was now sinful and oriented towards himself in a selfish sense. Interestingly enough, when Old Princeton battled the

29. I should add that this is quite right as far as the Roman Catholic notion of infused grace goes. The same cannot be said about the Reformed use of the idea in the loci on regeneration and sanctification.

30. See note 7 referencing Trueman's article on the Finnish school and the literature cited there.

31. For instance, see Richard A. Muller's discussion of *habits* in his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 1/Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 355–359.

32. For Aristotle's discussion of habits, see his *Metaphysics*, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966) 95ff.

New Divinity and Charles Finney in the 19th century this very issue was in contention.³³ Finney and others influenced by the New Divinity/New England Theology, rejected the notion of habits and so accused Calvinists of holding to a notion of regeneration and sanctification entailing the physical change of the substance of human nature. So when Horton calls for the rejection of the infusion of a gracious habit in regeneration and sanctification, the significance of his innovative construction can be helpfully understood against this background.³⁴ So an infusion of a gracious habit in the Reformed tradition is not about ontological deficiency as it clearly was for Thomas. Here what was being argued was that regeneration and sanctification required an ethical reorientation brought about by the “secret energy” of the Holy Spirit.

So what does Horton suggest as a replacement for the infusion of a gracious habit in regeneration and sanctification? Horton is correct, I believe, to question the connection of infused habits with the doctrine of the *donum superadditum* (194–95).³⁵ There is much that could be said in criticism of this doctrine. For our purposes the problem of the superadded gift is that it entails that the essential problem with Adam was that he was ontologically defective. Of course this flies in the face of Scripture’s record of God’s own satisfaction with his

creation (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31). However it is not clear to me that the doctrine of infused habits is dependent upon the *donum* at all. That it was connected in Augustine and others does not settle the issue. When the Reformers and their heirs take up the doctrine, significant changes occur and while Horton grants this, he does not seem to take these changes seriously enough. What Horton offers in the place occupied by the infusion of habits is the constitutive (i.e., creative) forensic speech act of God. God speaks a new reality into existence. Inasmuch as some formulations of the doctrine of the infusion of habits look like they reduce the work of the Spirit to the natural workings of the already existent human nature, then the doctrine of infusion is problematic (190). Building on the insights of Bruce McCormack, Horton believes that infusion should be replaced by a declarative speech act that also brings into question the ordering of the reception of the benefits of redemption. Unfortunately space does not allow me to interact with Horton’s dependence on McCormack in great detail. At least one concern that I have is that when Horton describes the divine speech act as “creative,” that is, bringing about what it declares, is that not the same as saying that the single speech act has forensic and transformative elements fused together? Is that not the same as confusing or blurring the distinction between justification and sanctification? The upshot of the whole discussion is that regeneration, sanctification, and glorification grow out of justification and seem to me to be emptied of their distinguishing characteristics. Yes, Horton affirms that there are differences between justification and the transformative benefits. However, inasmuch as they grow out of justification and are grounded in a declarative speech act themselves, I find it hard to distinguish them.

At this point (from 211 onward) Horton offers a discussion of the Palamite essence/energies discussion drawn from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Gregory Palamas argued that we do not have direct contact with God’s essence, but that God’s acts in history are his energies. This reminds me of the Creator/creature and archetype/ectype distinction and so may be a helpful theological development. Horton notes that the Western tradition, with its infusion of gracious habits, tends to blur the distinction between God and the creature. Inasmuch as this is a tendency connected with the doctrine of infusion, I think Horton offers a welcome corrective.

In the tenth chapter Horton offers a critique of the distinction in some circles within the Reformed community between regeneration and effectual calling. I would affirm that these should be simultaneous. However, regeneration might better be understood as the *result* of the effectual call. In the eleventh chapter the author offers further exposition on the nature of the divine declarative speech act. Here Horton argues anew for the logical priority of justification to transformation (244). “If union with Christ in the covenant of grace is the matrix for

33. See the book *Princeton Versus the New Divinity: The Meaning of Sin, Grace, Salvation, Revival* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2002) for evidence of this. I should also note that Horton is in this argument setting up the context in which to criticize and reject Jonathan Edwards. Horton is apparently dependent upon the Korean-American school of Edwards interpretation which reads Edwards in a nearly Neoplatonic pantheistic/panentheistic fashion. This school, owing to the ground-breaking scholarship of Sang H. Lee in his *Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) who argues for Edwards radically reworking the metaphysical tradition of the West with a dispositional ontology, has been countered in the recent work of Stephen R. Holmes, “Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology: A Response to Sang Hyun Lee,” in *Jonathan Edwards, Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004) 99–114. More and more I am persuaded that Holmes is basically correct about Edwards and that he can be interpreted more than adequately within the confines of a traditional ontology.

34. The distinction between the substance of human nature and habits may be behind Albert Wolters’ distinction between the *structures* and *direction* of creation. According to Wolters, who writes from the Kuyperian perspective, the fall did not obliterate the structure of God’s creation, but it did change its direction. See *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

35. The doctrine of the *donum superadditum* is the teaching, standard in Roman Catholic theology, that Adam was created in natural state without holiness and righteousness and that these attributes were supernaturally bestowed after his creation. Protestantism has usually rejected this doctrine, affirming that holiness and righteousness were part of Adam’s nature as image of God. One implication of the doctrine of the *donum* is that man can function quite adequately subsequent to the fall.

Paul's *ordo*, justification remains its source, even for adoption. We do not move from the topic of justification to other (more ostensibly interesting) ones, but are always relating the riches of our inheritance to this decisive gift" (247). Here, as I have noted before, there seems to be some confusion. Is justification the *source* of union with Christ or is union with Christ the matrix for "Paul's *ordo*"? The last time I checked, justification was *one aspect of the order of salvation*. Horton has, as I have already noted, removed justification from *within* the *ordo* and now placed the remaining benefits of redemption in relation to (and apparently subservient to) justification. This seems to be an entailment of making justification the foundation of union with Christ. This may be correct (I do not think so), but it is not what the Reformed tradition has taught.³⁶ And why does a concern for the other benefits of redemption reduce to thinking they are "more important"? To me that is like suggesting that my right leg is more important than my left. Horton's comments only make sense if one *reduces* salvation to justification. And this seems to result from Horton's failure to reckon with the full nature of sin. Sin is about guilt, but not only about guilt. Sin is also about corruption or pollution. And it does not seem to me that guilt produces corruption or vice versa. They occur as simultaneous results of the fall. I would also note that grounding transformation in justification may create an unintended consequence. Depending upon one's understanding of causation, by making justification *the ground* of transformation, one is including within justification itself (which ought to be purely forensic) a transformative element. How is that possible, you ask? Here's how. In some forms of causation, the nature of the effect must be reflective of the nature of the cause. So that if the effect of justification is transformative, then justification itself must possess a transformative nature itself.³⁷

In the twelfth and final chapter, Horton discusses the Eastern Orthodox notion of *theosis* or divinization. In its standard treatment by Eastern Orthodox theologians this is problematic due to its assumption that the basic problem with humanity is ontological deficiency rather than ethical rebellion. Horton believes that the Palamite distinction between God's essence and energies may make *theosis* a legitimate option (269). Horton argues that "Reformed theology comes closest to the classic category of divinization when it takes up the topic of *glorification* as both final vindication and restoration of the image" (279). Horton is quite right that the beatific vision, which is how glorification has been traditionally understood, as the East stresses, involves the whole person and not just a disembodied spirit. Glorification is the culmination of the eschatological process of redemptive history. It is not the culmination of mental/spiritual ascent. God has been at work in history saving his people for himself and this does not avoid the physical. It is here that Jonathan Edwards experiences a

"drive-by" critique. Unfortunately I do not have the space to engage Horton at length. I can simply say that while Edwards may be problematic with regard to his idealism, Horton seems to make a connection between this and Edwards on justification as if Edwards has been demonstrably shown to have compromised his doctrine in this area. Suffice it to say that current scholarship has called into question the work upon which Horton builds his comments.³⁸ I would recommend three dissertations that Horton should read and digest by Brandon Withrow, Michael McClenahan, and the recently published book *The Infinite Merit of Christ* by Craig H. Biehl.³⁹

So what shall we say about *Covenant and Salvation*? For my part, I think Horton is mistaken on the relationship of justification to union with Christ. However, on the other hand, he offers us some very intriguing options for further consideration. I think the republication thesis if properly formulated and nuanced is probably the best way to understand the Mosaic administration. And while the application of speech act theory to justification looked promising, in Horton's hands, there appears to be a confusion of declaration and creation. I think the speech act model fails as an architectonic structure for union with Christ as a whole because of the confusion aforementioned. I also think there is some benefit to further exploration of the essence/energies distinction.

Life in Christ

We now turn to the third and final book of this review. Like Billings, Mark Garcia examines the theology of John Calvin on union with Christ. However, unlike Billings (and Horton), Garcia is attempting to look at Calvin in his own theological and historical context. Billings does this to a certain extent, but the questions he brings to Calvin arise from his interaction with Radical Orthodoxy and gift theology. This is, of course, not to say that Garcia has no concern for the contemporary scene. Anyone who claims to do historical theology in total

36. As one example, see the comments on the relation of the *ordo salutis* to union with Christ in John Murray's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 161.

37. One such discussion of causation can be found in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (London: Burns, Oats, & Washburne, Ltd., 1920–1942) 1a.75–79. See my previous comments about making the divine speech act not only declarative but creative.

38. See my chapter on this very topic in *Resurrection and Eschatology*, especially p. 482 n 10.

39. Brandon Withrow, "Full of Wondrous and Glorious Things': The Exegetical Mind of Jonathan Edwards in His Anglo-American Context" (PhD diss. Westminster Theological Seminary, 2007); Michael G. McClenahan, "Jonathan Edwards' Doctrine of Justification up to the Period of the First Great Awakening" (DPhil diss. Oxford University, 2006); and Craig Biehl, *The Infinite Merit of Christ: The Glory of Christ's Obedience in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Jackson: Reformed Academic Press, 2009).

abstraction from the contemporary scene is only fooling himself. However, I think it is fair to say that Garcia's overarching concern is with Calvin as he was in his day more so than with Calvin as he has been received in the church today. Having said that, I would hasten to add Garcia's work is certainly useful for the church today. After all, we benefit most from past theologians when we actually understand them rightly. It would be surprising if Garcia's work was not beneficial to the church as of the three authors surveyed here, he is the only one who currently serves in the pastorate. Garcia is pastor of Immanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in West Allegheny, PA.

Garcia's book, *Life in Christ*, seeks to examine the nature of Calvin's doctrine of the *duplex gratia dei* within the context of union with Christ which he shortens to the *Unio Christi/duplex gratia* model. This 356 page book contains a forward by the late historical theologian David Wright, a preface, introduction, five chapters, a conclusion and two appendices. Garcia eases us into the subject matter with a helpful introduction (1–7) which is followed by one chapter (11–46) which situates his study within the history of Calvin studies, especially those concerned with Calvin's understanding of union with Christ. Here Garcia also outlines his methodology and explains why he narrowly focuses his work on three specific case studies. This is all standard fare for doctoral dissertations. Like the work of Billings, but unlike the work of Horton, this volume is a revised edition of Garcia's doctoral work at the University of Edinburgh. In the second chapter (47–86) we have a discussion of the precursors to Calvin on union along with the theology of union in other reformers. In the third chapter (89–147) Garcia introduces the first of three case studies where he actually traces out how the doctrine of union with Christ and the *duplex gratia dei* functioned in Calvin's overall theology. In this chapter Garcia traces out how Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ developed over the various revisions of his *Romans* commentary and how these revisions reflect a replication principle with regard to good works in the life of the believer. In the fourth chapter (149–195) we discover the multi-layered nature of Calvin's theology (actually of theology in general) and how his soteriology and his sacramentology interfaced and how his doctrine of union with Christ played itself out in the disputes Calvin had with Lutheran scholars Westphal and Heshusius over the matter of the *manducatio impiorum* ("impious eating") in the Lord's Supper. The fifth chapter (197–252) is perhaps the center piece of the whole book where Garcia details for the reader the theologically rich

interchange between Calvin and Andreas Osiander and here we see the nature of Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ and the *duplex gratia dei* and how his formulation differed from that of Osiander. Garcia then provides a helpful summary conclusion (255–268) followed by two appendices, one showing the marginal references to Paul in Calvin's chapter on justification in the second edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* from 1539 and the second appendix discussing the correspondence between Calvin and the Italian reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli on the nature of union with Christ.

Now we may return to the basic question of what Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ was and what, if anything, that has to do with the *duplex gratia dei*. Calvin, following the apostle Paul, argues that all the benefits of redemption are obtained and possessed by means of Holy Spirit created faith uniting the believer to the person of Jesus Christ. Only as the believer is "in Christ" does he benefit from the work of Christ. Calvin sums up this point in an oft-cited passage from book three of the *Institutes*, "First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us."⁴⁰ Further, the so-called *duplex gratia dei* has been properly translated as the "twofold grace of God." This twofold grace is comprised of justification and sanctification (or, as Calvin would say, regeneration). According to Garcia, these accrue to the believer, says Calvin, *simultaneously* as soon as a person is united to Christ by faith. In other words, there is no chronological priority of one aspect of this grace over the other. Neither is there a logical priority. Just as sin results simultaneously in guilt and corruption, so union with Christ results simultaneously in justification and sanctification. Calvin's *Chalcedonian* instinct manifests itself here. The reader may be asking himself how a discussion about the one person of Jesus Christ and his two natures relates to this discussion. Here is how: the Chalcedonian formula exemplifies the *distinct yet inseparable* principle. Just as the divine and human natures are united in the one person of Christ, yet not separated or confused, so also in union with Christ, the distinct redemptive benefits of justification on the one hand and sanctification on the other accrue simultaneously (that is, unitedly) all the while retaining their own integrity. Justification and sanctification come to the believer together but that does not mean that they are the same benefit or that they should be confused or blended. So we can say that the *unio Christi/duplex gratia* principle tells us that justification and sanctification are distinct yet inseparable benefits of redemption that the believer enjoys only as he is joined to the person of the redeemer. The Christian cannot be justified without also being sanctified nor can he enjoy the benefits of redemption apart from the Benefactor of redemption, Jesus Christ.⁴¹

40. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961) 3.1.1. Cited in Garcia, *Life in Christ*, p. 1.

41. Please note that what is not being said is that the two natures of Christ are parallel to the *duplex gratia dei*. What is operative in the two cases is the principle of *distinction, yet inseparability*.

The third chapter, which is the first of three case studies that show how Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ actually functioned, not only details how Calvin typically revised his writings (the *Romans* commentary and the *Institutes*), but we also see the development of Calvin's "replication principle." This principle, drawn from the "golden chain" of Romans 8:27–30, is that the ends for which God has elected his people—namely eternal fellowship with him in the new heavens and new earth—account for all the previous steps in the chain. Sometimes this is stated in terms of the Aristotelian maxim, the last step in execution is the first in intent.⁴² That is, while glorification is the last link in the golden chain of redemption, it is the reason God elects a people for himself. The ultimate goal of salvation is that God will have a people conformed to the image of his Son with whom he will dwell. What this means is that what goes before in the golden chain is often in Scripture called a cause. Since good works precede the final judgment and the open vindication (justification in an *evidentiary* and not in a declarative or salvific sense) of the saints, they are sometimes called "causes" of the vindication. Calvin clearly explains that these "causes" are not meritorious. In fact, we might not even call them causes in a technical sense.

Additionally, the principle gets its name from a redemptive-historical dynamic. Not only are good works considered in an "improper" sense as causes of vindication at the last day, but there is a dynamic that is manifested in the life of every Christian that is a replication of the life of Christ. Just as Christ had to experience humiliation before he could enter into his exaltation, so the believer experiences humiliation before entering into his glorification. The believer certainly experiences suffering in this world. Sometimes this happens simply because Christians live in a fallen world, and like the rest of humanity they experience the vicissitudes of life. But as this principle makes clear, the Christian also suffers because he is united with Christ and experiences humiliation before entering into glorification. A Christian, united to Christ, will both suffer humiliation before entering into glory and has been fore-ordained to perform good works to the glory of God the Father. Because a man is justified and sanctified at the same time, good works must follow, although these have no part in justification. Calvin's doctrine of the *unio Christi/duplex gratia* informs his understanding of good works. Unlike Melancthon, who argued that good works were the necessary outgrowth of justification, Calvin argued that good works were the necessary result of union with Christ and its replication principle (205–207).

In the fourth chapter, which is the second case study, Garcia recounts Calvin's disputes with the Lutheran theologians Joachim Westphal and Tilemann Heshusius over the nature of the Lord's Supper. In this case study we see how Calvin built off of Augustine's *res* and *signa* distinction in his explication of

the supper and how this distinction with regard to the supper mirrored a similar distinction in his soteriology. What is that principle? It is that the sign and the thing signified are *distinct yet inseparable*. It would not be right to confuse the bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ. However, the one points to the other and when rightly entered into they will be experienced together. Additionally, Calvin incorporated his understanding of the reality of the distinct persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit who are nevertheless functionally inseparable in a redemptive economic sense. The risen Lord is at the Father's right hand and by definition a human body is localized somewhere and cannot be everywhere (as was argued in the Lutheran *ubiquitarian* doctrine). But because the Son of God is not limited to the human Jesus (the so-called *extra-Calvinisticum*) and because he is so closely related to the Holy Spirit, the Son is able to descend to fellowship with the saints in worship and conversely the saints are lifted heavenward by the Spirit Who then enables the saints to feed spiritually on Christ by faith.

The specific bone of contention in this dispute was Calvin's denial of the Lutheran doctrine of the *manducatio impiorum*. That is, Lutheran teaching on the ubiquity of the physical body of Christ entailed that (unsaved) sinners also ate the body of Christ when they partook of the elements in the Lord's Supper. Christ's body was located wherever the elements of the bread and wine were, regardless of the presence of faith in the participants. Calvin was able to affirm the real presence of Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit while denying his local physical presence. And he was able to deny that the unsaved actually partake of Christ when they eat the bread and drink the wine. How was he able to do this? Calvin was able to do this because of his doctrine of *unio Christi/duplex gratia*. Given the close functional unity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, no one could partake of the Lord's Supper without experiencing the enlivening presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as one could not be justified without also being sanctified, so too one could not partake of the bread and wine (feeding on Christ) without experiencing the Holy Spirit as well. Calvin could not countenance an unbeliever enjoying the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The third case study is perhaps the most interesting. Anyone who has read the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* knows that Calvin spends a fair bit of time countering what he perceived to be the horrific errors of Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander. The author helps us to understand why Calvin would devote so much space to a dead man's teaching. The main reason is that Osiander's teaching on justification bore some

42. This is related to Aristotle's four causes: efficient, formal, material, and final. The expression reflects the nature of final causation. Readers can find a discussion of this in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a.2 & 3.

formal similarities to Calvin's own views and so he needed to clearly differentiate his views from Osiander's. Confessional Lutherans clearly rejected the teaching of Osiander and tarnished Calvin's reputation with remarks about the similarity of his views to Osiander's. Scholars prior to this work have already noted that Calvin's understanding of justification and union with Christ differed significantly from Osiander's, so what is new here? Garcia's contribution, which is also potentially discomfiting in some Reformed quarters, is that Calvin focuses on Osiander not only to distance himself from Osiander but also to show that Osiander is the *only thoroughly consistent* Lutheran. In other words, Garcia argues that Osiander was not accidentally in error but that his error arose from his specifically Lutheran theological commitments to the ubiquitarian fallacy.

How so, you may ask? It will help to explain what Osiander held. Osiander apparently was never happy with Melancthon's forensic formulation of justification and so sought to bring together the Lutheran theology of the ubiquity of Christ's body and the centrality of justification. In other words, Osiander argued that the Christian was united to Christ (and so he looks similar to Calvin here) but that the righteousness imputed to the believer's account is the essential righteousness that Christ possessed as the second person of the Triune God. What happens here is that, among other things, Osiander undermines the Creator/creature distinction. Calvin reminds readers in the *Institutes* that believers are united to Christ by faith and have the righteousness he acquired by his perfect obedience imputed to them. It is not Christ's inherent divine righteousness that is imputed to believers but his righteousness as the divine-human Mediator that is credited to the believer.

Calvin went further, says Garcia, by arguing that Osiander was not so much a rogue Lutheran theologian, but in fact the only truly consistent Lutheran! By stressing the Lutheran understanding of justification as the source of sanctification and the ubiquitarian denial of the Chalcedonian formula, Lutheranism was guilty of contravening the Chalcedonian formula by mixing the divine and human natures in Christ (by saying that his human body is everywhere present, i.e., ubiquitous) and it was guilty of undermining its own concern with justification by following Melancthon in grounding sanctification/good works in justification. So, as Garcia notes, while the Reformed and Lutherans agreed in their basic definitions of justification (for which we all ought to praise God!), they differed greatly in understanding the context of that doctrine and its relation to sanctification and union with Christ.

Life in Christ is a richly and densely packed study. There is much to commend in it. But I do have two concerns. The first is this: does the stress on the differences between the Lutheran and Reformed understanding of justification undermine the definitional agreement? Is there an implicit belittling

of confessionalism by suggesting that the agreement between the Reformed and Lutheran communities on justification is definitional and only on the basic confessional level? It seems to me that Garcia has pointed out real and significant differences between the two communities. Traditionally, for the Reformed, justification occurs within union with Christ. For the Lutheran it occurs outside of union and leads into it. Those are very different contexts. My other concern is Garcia's discussion of justifying faith and its relationship to faithfulness at the end of his study. It seems to me that this comes too close to the Roman Catholic doctrine of formed faith for my comfort. Perhaps I can offer this suggestion: why not extend the *duplex* model to faith itself or extend it explicitly? Rather than saying that justifying faith is itself faithfulness, would it not be better to say that faith contains within itself (like union) a justifying aspect and a sanctifying aspect? Just as we say that union has a duplex gratia, can we not say that faith can be distinguished into its justifying aspect which is passive and receptive and its sanctifying aspect which is active and which yields faithfulness? Is it not more faithful to the replication principle to note that sanctifying faith yields good works? Perhaps an imperfect, homely illustration would help here. I am a son, a husband, a father, a minister and a student. While I am one person (I am *inseparable* from my various roles), every role is not significant in every situation. For instance, all other things being equal, my school is concerned about my role as student. It is not concerned (or *as* concerned) with my role as son. In other words, my role as son does not enter into my performance as a student (or with the assessment of me as a student). Again this is not a perfect analogy as I am a student at a Christian seminary and the school will undoubtedly take some interest in my treatment of my parents, wife, and children, etc. But the point is more than adequately made. These criticisms do not undermine my great appreciation for the stellar scholarship of Mark Garcia.

Conclusion

So we have come to the end of this review essay. What shall we say? Two of the studies deal with Calvin's doctrine of union and the other deals with the doctrine of union within contemporary Reformed theology. More importantly, it is wise to note that Billings and Horton have written from the perspective of systematic theology and Garcia has written a historical theological study. It seems to me that we have three models of union with Christ: (1) The Billings model with the twofold blessing of justification and sanctification within union but with a *logical priority* of justification to sanctification; (2) The Horton model which has justification occurring *outside of, leading into and undergirding the whole of* union with Christ; and (3) the Garcia model which has justification and sanctification *simultaneously accruing*

to the believer in union with Christ with neither logical nor chronological priority. How does one settle between these models? They cannot all be correct. I will attempt an assessment which ultimately would have to be brought to the judgment bar of Scripture.

It seems to me that Mark Garcia captures the greatest amount of truth. At least I can say that I think he has demonstratively shown that for Calvin, the *duplex gratia* come to the believer simultaneously in union. And I agree with him that there is no logical or chronological priority between justification and sanctification. However, would it be right to say (with a nod to Billings) that there is an *existential* priority to justification over sanctification? What I mean by this is that, just as Calvin taught, there cannot be any growth in grace, no progressive sanctification, without knowing that God the Father is favorably disposed toward oneself. That is another way of saying that justification must be a settled matter. Whether this settledness can be called a “priority” will have to be sorted out at another time. There is no distinction in terms of the outcome between justification in the experience of the Christian and the judgment at the last day. There is, however, a public unveiling of the present justification at the last day, but that is to vindicate God himself, not Christians as such. I think that Horton’s concern with a forensic speech act with regard to justification is worth further consideration. I would even agree with him that justification is never out of sight when we consider the other blessings of union with Christ. However, his formulation is, how can I say it otherwise, Lutheran. Grounding union in justification just is not the Reformed (and I would add, biblical) way of seeing things. And while I do appreciate what speech act theory brings to the table as we consider justification, I find that extending it to the whole of the order of salvation evacuates the other blessings of their essential significance. At the end of the day, if we ground regeneration and sanctification in a forensic speech act and at the same time jettison some notion of the infusion of a gracious habit within the loci of regeneration and sanctification, what exactly, I might ask, is it that distinguishes regeneration and sanctification from justification? Is it the case that all we can say is that the first two are transformative and third is forensic? I fail to see the adequacy of that answer and would hasten to point out that even on Horton’s terms it does not work. After all, justification grounds the *ordo salutis*.

The Reformed community quite clearly has work to do in this area. At present there is no consensus on the details. Perhaps now is the time to call for an ecclesiastical council (of all NAPARC churches?) to wrestle with this issue. Of course I will argue for the essential accuracy of the Garcia model, but each of these volumes has brought clarification to the discussion. ■

Review: Cornelius P. Venema, *Accepted and Renewed in Christ. The “Twofold Grace of God” and the Interpretation of Calvin’s Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). 296 pages. ISBN 978-3525569108. €54.90 (cloth). Reviewed by Rev. Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

1. For me reading this book has been somewhat like becoming reacquainted with a friend not seen in a while. I first met its substance as the author’s 1985 Princeton Seminary doctoral dissertation, which was helpful to me at a time when I was studying Calvin’s soteriology in greater depth. Now that substance “has undergone considerable revision” (7). This includes a restructuring of the whole as well as some re-writing with particular attention to the considerable body of important studies of Calvin’s theology that have appeared in the past two decades. These revisions make the book all the more useful as a clearly written, in-depth guide into elements most prominent in Calvin’s understanding of the application or personal appropriation of salvation.

These key elements are reflected in the book’s title, *Accepted and Renewed in Christ*: justification, sanctification and union with Christ and how in Calvin’s view they are related. While the *Institutes*, especially Book 3, is appropriately prominent, considerable data from the commentaries, sermons and other materials, reflecting the author’s wide reading in Calvin, are also introduced or referenced.

The book has three main parts with a couple of introductory chapters. The latter set the stage for Venema’s own treatment by surveying major approaches to Calvin’s theology since the 19th century. Three are identified: the “central doctrine” approach, the formal approach focusing on structure and method, and the neo-orthodox or radically Christological approach (these three approaches are helpfully summarized in the concluding chapter, 262). In contrast to these approaches, Venema undertakes to show, quite successfully in my view, that, without subscribing to the failed notion that everything in Calvin’s theology derives from a single idea, like predestination or divine sovereignty, his understanding of justification, sanctification and their relationship is nonetheless coherent and without fundamental tensions within his overall understanding of God and his purposes not only as redeemer but as creator.

The three main parts, reflected in the titles of each, are structured around the “Twofold Grace of God” (*duplex gratia Dei*). Part One deals with the place of twofold grace within Calvin’s theology as a whole, primarily in the interests of making the important point that for Calvin that grace is not narrowly soteriological but functions for the realization and consummation of God’s original purposes in creation forfeited

by the fall and human sin. In terms of the basic structure of the *Institutes*, the knowledge of God the Creator (Book I) and God the Redeemer (Book 2) must be distinguished but not separated or left unrelated.

Part Two, the heart of the book, has separate chapters, as follows: on union with Christ and twofold grace, justification, sanctification (or repentance), the relationship between justification and sanctification, union with Christ and the imputation of his righteousness, double justification (the justification or acceptance of the believer's works along with his person), and several related issues not yet discussed (sanctification as an "effect" or "inferior cause" of justification, justification and the necessity of good works, Paul and James, covenant and kingdom).

Part Three broadens the discussion by relating twofold grace to larger interpretive issues in Calvin's theology: the Trinitarian and Christological basis of twofold grace; church and sacraments; law and gospel; the role of the "practical syllogism." A concluding chapter helpfully draws together in several subsections the major threads of the study as a whole. An extensive selected bibliography and a full author-subject index are provided.

2. This brief overview hardly does justice to the book or to the value to be gained from reading it carefully. A measure of the high level of its scholarship is its inclusion as Volume 2 in the *Reformed Historical Theology* series. A major strength is its primary concern, sustained and addressed in various ways throughout, to show that for Calvin justification and sanctification constitute a twofold grace (note the singular). Accordingly, "distinction without separation" (137–145, *passim*) best captures their relationship—on the analogy of the way Christ's two natures are united in his person, a Christological analogy that Calvin himself uses. "The Twofold Nature of the Gospel in Calvin's Theology," the title of the dissertation, is pervasively in view throughout the book. As justification is "the main hinge" of the Christian religion (*Institutes*, 3:11:1), sanctification for Calvin is a no less integral component of *the gospel*.

With this integral bond between them always in view it seems fair to say that Venema is primarily intent on showing how on various issues Calvin, without ever compromising or losing sight of their inseparability, clearly maintains the distinction between justification, as purely forensic/declarative and definitively settled, and sanctification ("regeneration" often and interchangeably for Calvin) or repentance, understood as a life-long process of personal renewal. How then are they related? "Calvin acknowledges an order between justification and sanctification." And, just prior to that statement, "the question of the order, sequence, and interrelation between justification and sanctification is one that Calvin often addresses and for which he provides a definite answer" (172). Specifically, the former is "the basis or presupposition"

for the latter; the latter is "the *telos*, consequence, or effect" of the former. Further, as the two are "invariably conjoined, this order or sequence is not chronological but theological" (172).

3. Does Calvin then consider justification to be the cause of sanctification? Here, Venema is not entirely clear (at least to me). To speak of sanctification as the "effect" of justification, as he notes Calvin does, suggests that the latter is its "cause" and why, in part, Calvin speaks of "justification as the 'first' or 'principal' part, and of sanctification as the 'second' part, of the gospel, ..." (172–173). And, subsequently, for Calvin, "Together, justification and sanctification comprise the manifold way in which God's grace in Christ appears to us, as we distinguish between its cause or foundation, on the one hand, and its effect, purpose, or consequence, on the other" (175).

It should be noted, however, that these statements are in a context where Venema is occupied specifically with how Calvin refers to sanctification not only as an "effect" but also as itself an "inferior cause" of justification. He explains that the latter expression has its sense "on the principle that a 'necessary consequence' is a kind of condition" (172). This serves, by the way, as a reminder that in Calvin's day, as well as presently, the language of "cause" (and "condition") has various senses that need to be distinguished as carefully and clearly as possible. Not to do so runs the risk of causing confusion.

Earlier, in discussing the distinct-yet-inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification, Venema speaks of "Calvin's insistence on a distinction between them in order to exclude any *causal* connection between them ..." (143, original italics) and, again in discussing his doctrine of double justification, "Calvin nowhere admits a causal relation between justification and sanctification, ..." (167). This, from my own study, admittedly not as extensive as Venema's, is a fair overall assessment. Calvin is clear: the cause of sanctification is not justification but Christ's Spirit at work in believers as they are united to him. Throughout Venema is concerned to keep clear that Calvin is emphatic that justification is prior to sanctification; the latter can only take place in those already justified, in those toward whom God is now propitious and who therefore are also confident of that mercy. Even as, on balance, it is "with equal emphasis his corollary conviction that God is only propitious toward those who repent, since repentance is a necessary and invariable accompaniment of justification" (143). This is surely a correct assessment.

4. At one point in discussing the inseparability of justification and sanctification Venema takes issue with the way Peter Lillback and Mark Garcia stress the difference between Calvin and Luther on justification, particularly on the place of good works (167, note 13). He finds Lillback's language "incautious" and "somewhat misleading" and Garcia's "equally misleading." This is so—the specific reason Venema gives—"since Calvin

clearly insists that the justification of the believer's works can only occur within the context of a prior justification of the believer's person."

I'm puzzled by this criticism. I hope not to be missing something but as I read not only what Venema cites from both (for Garcia from his 2004 Edinburgh dissertation, now available in *Life in Christ. Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology* [Paternoſter, 2008], 74–78, 258–264), as well as what both have written elsewhere, I find nothing that even suggests anything other than their full and clear agreement with Venema's reason just quoted. Similarly, both fully and clearly agree that for Calvin justification is the prior, absolutely requisite precondition for good works, that for him there is no ongoing sanctification without settled justification.

I raise this point because the view of Garcia and Lillback has been subjected to the same sort of misplaced criticism elsewhere, and Venema contributes, even if only in a passing comment, to this misunderstanding. As to the difference between Calvin and Luther, I'm prompted to add here that I'm fairly confident in saying that a Lutheran reviewer of this book (I haven't checked to see if there are such), given Venema's own accurate portrayal of Calvin on the relationship of justification and sanctification/good works, would come away about as unhappy with Venema as he would be with Lillback and Garcia!

5. Calvin's understanding of sanctification and its relationship to justification raises a question that warrants further discussion, sketched briefly here. No doubt his doctrine of justification can be fairly approached from a number of angles but surely as good a place as any to begin is where he begins his lengthy, multi-chapter treatment of justification in Book Three of the *Institutes*, chapter 11. There, in section 1, he offers this opening summary (*summa*):

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by his Spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life (Battles translation, 1: 725).

In view here "principally" is "a double grace" (*duplicem ... gratiam*) as that grace stems from being united with Christ "in faith," that union being described as "grasping" and "possessing" Christ and, again, as "partaking of him." This double grace, in turn, is delineated by two purpose clauses:

that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father;

that being sanctified by his Spirit, we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.

Each of these clauses, syntactically parallel to each other, contains a participial clause, likewise clearly parallel. In each the controlling participle is a perfect passive (*reconciliati ... sanctificati*): "having been reconciled ... having been sanctified."

What is noteworthy here is that not only reconciliation (here equivalent to justification) but also sanctification is definitive and settled. While elsewhere Calvin no doubt regularly treats sanctification (regeneration) as an ongoing, life-long process in the believer, here it appears to be otherwise. The sanctification in view does not take place through that process, expressed here as "to cultivate blamelessness and purity of life." Instead, having been "sanctified by the Spirit" is not only antecedent to that process but initiates it.

This squares with Calvin's understanding in his Romans commentary on the death to sin in 6:2ff. as referring not to the guilt of sin and justification but rather to a decisive break with the power of sin, a once-for-all break with sin's enslaving dominion at the inception of Christian life that gives rise to ongoing sanctification and growth in personal holiness. This prompts the question whether here and perhaps elsewhere Calvin anticipates subsequent Reformed teaching that more recently has been termed "definitive sanctification" by John Murray (*Collected Writings*, 2: 277–293). Venema, unless I have somehow missed it, does not discuss this instance of "sanctified," but the question seems worth exploring by him or someone else with a similar broad and in-depth acquaintance with Calvin.

6. Venema's basic approach in terms of the distinct-yet-inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification yields a particularly helpful treatment of the much-debated question of Calvin's understanding of law and gospel and their relationship (227–247; summarized, 271–273). Among the points Venema makes, there is "fundamental unity between the law and gospel in Calvin's theology" (272). One can only grasp this unity by recognizing the various functions or uses of the law he distinguishes, particularly between a "first" and "third" use. In terms of the former—the role of the law in pronouncing and sealing condemnation and revealing the need for justification—there is antithesis, specifically the unrelieved antithesis of justification by faith and justification by works (of the law). But, even here, "in free justification," the law-gospel antithesis is "not absolute" (272). This is so because for believers justification "as a free gift of God's grace" is based on Christ's fulfillment of the law's demands on their behalf.

The law's third use, what Calvin himself calls its "principal use" (*Institutes*, 2:7:12), is its role in sanctification, as it guides believers in doing, by the power of the Spirit, what actually

pleases God, however imperfectly. Here, the fully gracious character of the law and its entirely positive functioning is evident. Here there is only harmony between the law and the gospel, a harmony that excludes all antithesis and leaves no place for an uneasy tension between faith and good works as the fruit of faith. In the words of the closing sentence of Venema's treatment, to which I have hardly done justice here, "Therefore, to borrow the phrase used by Calvin to describe the relation between justification and sanctification, it is permissible to say that law and gospel are distinct yet inseparable elements in the administration of the gospel in the lives of those who through faith are united with Christ" (247). Just so.

7. Other strengths of this book could be pointed out. There is one respect in which, I think, it could have been even stronger and which prompts rounding out this review with the following reflections. Venema, it seems to me, could have been clearer and more emphatic about the integral place of union with Christ in Calvin's thinking on the application of salvation. I hope not to overstate this point. Certainly, he recognizes that union has a primary place, indicated already in the title itself ("in Christ"). But, it seems fair to say, the focus of the book as a whole is on "Accepted" and "Renewed" and their proper relationship in a way that leaves union more or less in the background, or at least its role less clearly in view. At one point Venema faults those who "overstate the extent to which union with Christ 'coordinates' its two benefits of justification and sanctification, ..." (136, note 9). But it could be asked whether he, for his part, does not understate that "coordination."

On this point, coordination is present, for instance, in the opening statements of the treatment of justification in the *Institutes* (3:11:1; quoted above). There Calvin is clear that justification, settled and definitive, is theologically (as well as, by the nature of the case, temporally) prior to the ongoing process of sanctification in the life of the justified believer. But he also indicates (see point 5 above), definitely if not so clearly, that the definitive reality ("having been sanctified") that gives rise to that process is coordinate with justification ("having been reconciled"), as both, together inseparably as twofold grace, stem from union with Christ. Here, it seems fair to say, a) both aspects of twofold grace are theologically coordinate, as b) union is theologically and effectively (though not temporally) prior to both.

Again, it is not as if Venema is uncertain or even unclear that union has a place in the application of redemption. He appropriately begins his lengthy exposition of twofold grace in Part Two with a helpful chapter on union with Christ by the Spirit through faith and throughout provides accurate statements relating union and twofold grace such as the following, "The burden of Calvin's doctrine of the 'twofold grace of God' is to hold these benefits together as distinct yet inseparable

consequences of the believer's union with Christ through the office of the Spirit, ..." (268); "... justification and sanctification are inseparable benefits of our incorporation into Christ ..." (259); "... the believer's union with Christ and its twofold benefit, justification and sanctification" (161). Instances of such statements and phrasings could be multiplied.

Where one might most expect an accent on union, however, it is missing. So, for instance, the Summary (148–149) to the (important and helpful) chapter on the relation of justification and sanctification states that "these two aspects of God's grace in Christ ... remain inseparably joined by virtue of their common foundation in Christ's redemptive work through the power of his Spirit." That, of course, is true as far as it goes. But for Calvin, especially by way of summary, it is true only as union with Christ is indispensable for mediating that common foundation and only as the inseparability involved exists as an integral consequence of that union; justification and sanctification (in its initiation and continuation) are inseparable (as well as distinct) only as they are, coordinately, the immediate fruit of union.

This criticism is similar to that William Evans makes of the dissertation in his recent *Imputation and Impartation*, and Venema, I suspect, would see his response to him as applying to me as well: "... I believe Evans has misread my argument. The inseparability of justification and sanctification is rooted not only in the saving work of the Triune God, but also in the unity of Christ's redemptive office and the believer's union with him through the bond of the Spirit" (152, note 6). I take this fair and balanced summary statement at face value. And I recognize that it is quite unreasonable to expect everything to be said to be repeated at every point. Yet I cannot escape the impression that at points, in statements where the inseparability of justification and sanctification is in view, expressions like "their common source in Christ's person and work" (147), "their common basis within the redemptive purposes and activity of the Triune God," "rooted in the redemptive economy of the Triune God" (266), are seen as adequate without any reference to union with Christ.

I would be prepared to withdraw the preceding sentence as overdrawn, were it not for the following statement, in fact a fairly sweeping concluding generalization: "In his exposition of justification and sanctification, Calvin does not subordinate these aspects of the application of Christ's work of redemption to a more basic, governing theological doctrine" (265). I recognize and agree with the point that Venema is concerned for in the immediate context, namely that twofold grace is not "a subsidiary doctrine" in the sense of "being derived deductively from a single, originating principle" (266); there is no "central dogma" in Calvin. However—and this, it seems to me, is unmistakable in Book Three of the *Institutes* and elsewhere—Calvin is emphatic that God's twofold grace is

in fact absolutely dependent, fairly stated, on a “more basic, governing theological” reality, the gracious reality of union with Christ. This is so in the sense that twofold grace derives directly from that union as the integral and necessary source of twofold grace; without union twofold grace does not and would not exist. The theological and controlling (though not temporal) antecedence of union seems clear in 3:11:1, for one (cited in 5 above).

This assertion can be tested further in a couple of other places.

a) Book Three of the *Institutes*, which deals with the application of salvation, begins as follows:

We must now examine this question. How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son—not for Christ’s own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us (3:1:1, bolding added).

Venema cites this passage (84) but, unless I’ve missed it, he does not comment on or give particular attention to the sentence I’ve bolded. In my view it is difficult to exaggerate its importance for Calvin’s applied soteriology as a whole. Emphatic as it is both by its positioning and strongly charged language, it provides the immediate answer, the very “first” thing needing to be said, to the question posed in the sentence that precedes it (see above). That question is the crucial question that drives all reflection on the application of salvation and may be fairly read as an equivalent to Luther’s, “How do I obtain a gracious God?” Calvin’s answer here stipulates what is primary, what controls *everything* said throughout Book Three about the application of redemption. That single most decisive factor is union: Christ must not remain “outside us,” we must not be “separated from him.” Or, to express it positively, as he presently does, it is necessary that “we grow into one body (*in unum*) with him.” Everything depends on that all-or-nothing reality. I must have Christ or I have nothing, Calvin is saying. Absent that union, his work for me, in all of its finished perfection, is—the sweeping, unrelieved language is striking—“useless and of no value.” Without union, the benefits that flow from it, including, as he will subsequently make clear, both aspects of God’s twofold grace, are simply nonexistent.

And, we may add, from the specific vantage point of faith and its role in justification, the determinative priority of union is clear when Calvin subsequently writes (3:11:7, italics added), “faith of itself does not possess the power of justifying, but *only*

in so far as it receives Christ.” In fact, “before his righteousness is received Christ is received in faith.” “Before” here is striking. It is hardly to be taken temporally, as if to say that one is united to Christ for a time without being justified, but it surely makes the *theological* and *effective* priority or antecedence of union plain.

In this regard, when Calvin says (3:11:1) that justification is “the main hinge on which religion turns,” that statement may not be lifted, aphoristic-like, out of context, as some do (Venema does *not* do that). Calvin has just made clear that this “hinge” is a component aspect of the twofold grace that stems from union with Christ. In other words, the “hinge” of justification, like any hinge, must be anchored if it is to function effectively and with stability. Justification has, and can only have, its pivotal significance as it is and remains fixed, and what provides that anchorage is the union that is the indispensable foundation and proximate source of everything in the application of salvation.

b) The chapter (10) “Union with Christ and the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness” provides a timely and very helpful discussion in the interests of showing that in Calvin there is not an irresolvable tension between them nor does union exclude imputation or make it redundant. In the course of that discussion (159) Venema quotes from *Institutes*, 3:11:10, the fullest single passage in Calvin and certainly the most arresting that I’m aware of in expressing the relationship between union and justification/imputation.

I confess that we are deprived of this utterly incomparable good [imputed righteousness; justification] until Christ is made ours. Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him (bolding added).

What is puzzling to me is that Venema quotes only the light-faced sentences; the bolded sentences are omitted. But just these bracketing sentences, particularly the last, give this passage its full force; without them the positive, integral relation between union and imputation is not as pointed and clear. Unmistakable in the first is the echo of the second sentence in 3:1:1 (“Christ ... outside of us, and we ... separated from him, ... useless and of no value to us”). Union – note: Spirit-worked “mystical union” – is not the merely extrinsic setting

for imputation. For the absence of that union would involve a “deprivation” of such magnitude that not only would imputation be a legal fiction, it would be nonexistent. Because that is the case union is to be “accorded ... the highest degree of importance.”

The last sentence brings everything just said to a focus with the most happy expression “fellowship of righteousness” (*iustitiae societatem*—apparently only here in Calvin). Imputed righteousness is the “utterly incomparable good” that it is specifically in the form of this fellowship. Here Christ’s righteousness imputed may be said to be alien or other (*extraneous*) in the sense that it is his doing, his obedience, not the believer’s. But in another sense, in union with him, as by his Spirit he is in us (*in nobis*) and we are in him (*in eo*), it is not alien at all. Union, “this spiritual bond” (just beyond the passage quoted), brings with it justification as forensic fellowship, a sharing in Christ’s righteousness by imputation.

As I am writing this review I have just finished reading N. T. Wright’s recent book on justification in Paul (*Justification. God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision*) with its emphatic rejection of any notion in Paul of Christ’s righteousness as imputed to the believer—a polemic, I can’t escape the impression, that has for him an unmistakable edge of religious antipathy; imputation, in his view as he has famously put it elsewhere, is “a cold piece of business” (*What Saint Paul Really Said*, 110).

Wright clearly wants in some sense to maintain that justification is forensic. But his polemic against imputation nonetheless evidences all too clearly the sad polarity that has continued to plague biblical and theological studies over the past several centuries in considering the Creator–creature relationship and matters of salvation: the alleged incompatibility of legal and relational considerations, the diminishing or even denial of the forensic in favor of what is personal. In the face of this polarization, as disastrous in its consequences as it is unnecessary, Calvin’s forensic “fellowship of righteousness” seems so wonderfully and satisfyingly pointed in capturing the harmony of the legal and the personal in the matter of our justification. And in this, “our sharing in Christ, which justifies us” (3:16:1), he is only reflecting faithfully the apostolic aspiration “to gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God for faith” (Phil. 3:8–9). I have no doubt that Venema would share this assessment.

With these reflections on union with Christ in Calvin, I thank Dr. Venema for his fine work and commend it heartily to pastors, teachers, students and others. Reading this book is bound to deepen their understanding not only of Calvin but also, and more importantly, in this 500th anniversary year of his birth, of the biblical soteriology that he was granted to express in such a peerless fashion. ■

Review: Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). 325 pages. ISBN 978-0-664-23071-5. \$34.95. Reviewed by Wes Bredenhof, Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

This is the fourth and final volume in an effort to give a fresh exposition of several theological loci through the lens of covenant theology. Previous efforts by Michael Horton covered prolegomena/eschatology (*Covenant and Eschatology*), christology (*Lord and Servant*) and soteriology (*Covenant and Salvation*). In this work, the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology) is the focus and the author argues for the integration of two themes often considered to be antithetical: people and place. While assuming a specialist knowledge in many places and tightly written throughout, *People and Place* will prove to be the most accessible volume in this series.

In the first chapter, Horton develops the relationship between Christ and ecclesiology by explaining his real absence and real presence. At his ascension, Christ became absent from the church in a real and meaningful way. However, with Pentecost, he also became truly present with his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one through whom the church has union with Christ.

Word and sacrament are the focus of the next four chapters which explain how the church is created and sustained. The church is “*creatura verbi*,” a creature of the word—and that word is covenantal in nature, according to Horton. This conception of the church naturally has a bearing on questions of canon as well. In this connection, Horton shares with Stanley Grenz who “reverses the word-faith relationship” and asserts that “Scripture is the record of the faith-community’s encounter with God” (86).

As one would expect, sacramentology is developed with an understanding of the sacraments as covenant signs and seals. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper ratify the covenant of grace in a manner analogous to the ratification of ancient treaties. In harmony with the Reformed confessions, Horton argues for an understanding of baptism which stresses the divine activity in this sacrament. A corollary to this argument is his advocacy of the baptism of the infant children of believers.

An entire chapter (5) is dedicated to explaining a Reformed, covenantal view of eucharistic theology. Once again, Horton speaks the language of confessionally Reformed theology—the Lord Jesus is not present in the elements of bread and wine, but he is *really* present at the Lord’s Supper. As he has done elsewhere, Horton argues in this chapter for more frequent (ideally weekly) communion.

In the second part of the book, the attributes of the church (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) are explicated. Horton’s purpose is to explain the “identity and mission of the church as a result

of the circumstances of its location and origin” as well as “to reintegrate the marks and mission of the church” (155). Here he interacts with Roman Catholic theologies which posit an essential identification of Christ and the church, as well as those Protestant theologies which go in the other direction, privileging the many versus the one. Horton takes catholicity and holiness together, drawing out the covenantal bonds between these two attributes. He also explains the invisible/visible distinction, insisting that it does not arise from any sort of platonic conception, but rather from Scripture itself. Horton maintains that “presbyterian polity is the most appropriate expression of a covenantal ecclesiology” (212). Finally, in chapter 8, he builds a “case for identifying the marks of the church (preaching and sacrament) as constitutive for a covenantal theology of mission” (222).

The third part of the book tackles the eschatological dimension of a covenantal ecclesiology. Here Horton builds mostly on the biblical theological work of G.K. Beale and Meredith Kline to argue that God’s purpose is to establish his temple on earth in the age to come. The temple typology and themes of holy land and holy war are unfolded in helpful summary form, or what passes for a summary in these volumes. The final chapter “argues that a covenantal theology is necessarily a liturgical theology and that the eucharistic economy is not only the heartbeat of ecclesial fellowship, but of reality itself” (289). In the age to come, we will see a perfect, restored liturgy with all fulfilling their proper, God-ordained roles. In this age, we see a glimmer of this scene among God’s people gathered in worship. In this age, believers are “passive receivers of the gift of salvation, but they are hereby rendered active worshippers in a life of thanksgiving that is exhibited chiefly in loving service to our neighbours” (303).

Generally, *People and Place* is a challenging, yet rewarding read. Reformed theologians will appreciate the manner in which Horton creatively stakes his theological ground while at the same time respecting the traditional principles and structures of our theology. Both Reformed and non-Reformed theologians will welcome the abundant interaction with other theologians. In this vein, Horton also endeavours to apply the essence/energies distinction of Eastern Orthodoxy to Reformed theology—whether one agrees or disagrees with this effort, it is a stimulating line of thought and one which was worked out in more detail in *Covenant and Salvation*. Pastors with the patience for a difficult read (in places) will also find much of value in *People and Place* for their preaching and teaching, as also with the other volumes in this series.

For instance, Horton inveighs against the “identification of Christ’s person and work with the historical development of the church” (12). This is typically spoken of in terms of incarnational mission or ministry. The classic text for such a view is John 20:21 where the Lord Jesus says, “As the Father

has sent me, I am sending you.” Later Horton quotes Lesslie Newbigin, “There is in truth no ‘extension of the incarnation,’ for His incarnation was in order to make an offering of Himself in the flesh ‘once for all’” (224). Unfortunately, Newbigin’s view of things is uncommon today and it has become a sort of received orthodoxy in Protestant missiology that the church’s mission is robustly analogous to the mission of Christ.

As another example, Horton builds on the work of Jon Levenson to work out the progression from hearing to seeing in Biblical theology. At Sinai “the ear is central, while at Zion it is the eye” (64). While hearing took priority over seeing in Old Testament times, at the Temple this role was reversed and Horton argues that this was because of the typological relationship of the Temple to Christ: “more than the energetic word that must be heard, the incarnate Word became the object of other senses as well” (64). Horton unfolds how this dialectic continues to exist in this age, to be resolved fully in the age to come. Today is primarily a time for hearing, though our other senses are also addressed in the sacraments. Pastors should be able to make fruitful use of these insights, especially when teaching about the means of grace.

Although there are other items that could be mentioned, one last one has to do with the missional character of worship. “Missional character” does not mean seeker-sensitive, but the church simply doing what the church has been called to do in the way it has been called to do it: worshipping according to God’s Word, including the faithful administration of the means of grace. Writes Horton, “The orderly worship of the saints gathered in weekly assembly for preaching, teaching, and witness *is* missional (1 Cor. 14:23–25)” (254). This is an excellent point and the author develops it further to include not only the preaching of the Word, but also the administration of the sacraments, especially the Lord’s Supper: “This means that a genuinely missional church should not only provoke a disrupting encounter with a holy and gracious God in its preaching and teaching, but also in the regular celebration of the Supper. Why should the Supper be celebrated so infrequently and, in many cases, at an evening service where visitors are less likely to attend (and therefore to be offended, perplexed, convicted, or intrigued)? (255).” No gimmicks are needed for a church to be missional in its worship—it only need be receptive to what the Lord has instituted in terms of the means of grace.

While as a whole this book can be recommended, there are a number of caveats, a number of places where question marks must be placed. For example, a curious oversight exists in chapter 5 dealing with the Lord’s Supper. Horton asks the question, “How is Christ received in the sacrament?” Horton’s answer is that it is simply through the agency of the Spirit (128). Reformed theology has not been that interested in the mechanics (129). This answer is correct, but not as full-orbed

as it could be. For instance, the Heidelberg Catechism concurs that we share in Christ's true body and blood through the working of the Spirit (QA 79). But the Catechism also states that eating the crucified body and shed blood of Christ means accepting "with a believing heart all the suffering and death of Christ ..." (QA 76). *Faith* is also part of the agency. Undoubtedly, Horton would agree with that and traces of that perspective can be detected.

Another concern has to do with the distinction between the true and false church. This distinction is mentioned several times. In fact, in a footnote at one point, Horton quotes a large section of Belgic Confession article 29 on this distinction (222). However, the author never really fleshes this out to any real degree of depth. When one discusses the issue of identity in ecclesiology, it is necessary to be clear on the norms of Scripture with regards to what is a true church and what is a false church. Horton mentions the three marks of the true church in several places, but does not exposit or apply them in a meaningful way. While there is a place for the distinction of the Westminster Confession of more pure and less pure churches, it seems to this reviewer that equal, if not greater, attention should be given to the distinction found in the Belgic Confession. This privileging of a certain understanding of the more pure/less pure distinction might be the background to this questionable statement of Horton: "... we should not speak of a Reformed faith or an Orthodox theology or a Lutheran confession, but of a Christian faith, theology and confession, from a Reformed, Orthodox, or Lutheran perspective" (210). Relating the marks to mission, historically the Reformed churches have regarded Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox to be objects of mission because they are members of false churches. This historical and confessional perspective sounds muted in *People and Place*.

Earlier the influence of Meredith Kline was mentioned—in fact, his fingerprints are all over each of the volumes in this series. Sometimes this is to salutary effect, but not always. In *Lord and Servant*, Horton had already indicated his appreciation for Kline's framework interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. That appreciation returns in *People and Place* and becomes even more explicit: "God speaks creation into being, and against the backdrop of the 'void and darkness' in Genesis 1:2, there are the six days of creation, meant to be understood, I believe, not as literal twenty-four hour periods but as day-frames that correlate the creation of each domain with its ruler" (290). There is a footnote at the end of that sentence to Kline's *Kingdom Prologue*. Now this is not the place to interact in a comprehensive way with the framework hypothesis, but it should be noted that Horton does hold to this position, one which this reviewer finds unpersuasive. It does not even appear necessary to have been stated at this particular point in Horton's argument.

More disconcerting is Horton's appropriation of Kline's view of the imprecatory psalms. Horton writes, "They may be spoken, even sung, by the royal psalmist who prefigured the messianic judge of the earth. Yet they are out of place on the lips of Christians today, guided as we are not by the ethics of intrusion, but by the ethics of common grace" (276). Books have been written dealing with this subject (James Adams' *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace* springs to mind) arguing that Christians may and should sing these psalms in a christological fashion. Christians are in a holy war, albeit this war is not for a physical plot of land. It is the holy war of Christ himself and the imprecatory psalms are his inspired war songs and as those who are united to Christ, it is appropriate that we sing them.

As serious as some of those concerns are, *People and Place* is a recommended read. The word on the street is that Michael Horton is preparing a systematic theology. If this series is any indication, we have much to look forward to. Horton has proven himself as a creative communicator on both the popular and academic levels. It's also readily evident that he is committed to the Reformed faith as expressed in our confessions. With God's blessing, may he continue to be of service to believers in the English speaking world and elsewhere. ■

Review: Daniel R. Hyde, *In Living Color: Images of Christ and the Means of Grace* (Wyoming, Mich.: The Reformed Fellowship, 2009). 192 pages. ISBN 978-0979367731. \$13. Reviewed by Rev. Ryan M. McGraw, pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Conway, SC, and president of the alumni association of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, from which he holds a M.Div. and a Th.M.

In this book, Daniel Hyde has taken an extremely unpopular and outdated stance upon a controversial area of Reformed theology. For this I give hearty thanks to God, since the stand he has taken must be taken, and because the future strength and vitality of the Church hinges at least partly upon the matter that he has treated. As Hyde wrote,

The simple purpose of the book you hold in your hands, then, is to give a pastoral explanation from Scripture and our confessions for the classic Reformed prohibition of images of God and Jesus Christ from Scripture and our confessions. We will do this by looking at man's desire for the visual in his relationship with God, but then we will show how God rejects man's efforts to image him. Instead of images, God has given the new covenant church the Word and sacraments as manifestations of his presence among us until Christ comes again, visibly and corporeally—in living color" (27–28).

The importance of the question of images of Christ has often been downplayed or undermined in most modern discussions. However, what is viewed as a peripheral matter often proves to be a symptom of a firmly established and deadly disease. It is instructive to observe that the historic Reformed position on images of Christ is now being discarded almost as universally as it was once upheld. It is even more instructive to learn *why* the change has occurred. This does not insinuate that all who accept images of Christ are leading the Church into apostasy. However, Hyde has correctly identified the fact that the modern *rejection* of the historic position on this subject is closely connected to the modern *emphasis* upon films and artwork as means of grace. The “Reformed” authors Hyde interacts with are very bold. Some of them not only deny the prohibition of images, but they virtually *require* the use of images of Christ *in place of preaching* for the purposes of evangelism and of educating children. Hyde even cited one author who asserted that the Reformed prohibition of images of the Godhead was virtually a forgotten relic of the past (19). In light of such a purportedly universal shift away from the unanimous historic position of the Reformed confessions, the question arises: “What does it mean to be ‘Reformed?’” Hyde answers, “To have a ‘Reformed theology’ means so much more than believing in the acronym TULIP. To be Reformed means to be confessional” (22).

The book begins with a gripping introduction presenting the significance of the problem, followed by three lengthy chapters, and a conclusion. The foreword by Joel Beeke is noteworthy, in which he states, “I . . . believe that this book has far-reaching implications for all of worship” (9). *In Living Color* is well organized, thoroughly conversant with both old and modern sources, and is well argued. For a small book written on a popular level, Hyde’s bibliography is impressive. The first chapter examines man’s media, which has always consisted of images. The latter two chapters demonstrate that God’s chosen media consists of Preaching and Sacraments, respectively. The downside to this organization is the inordinate length of each chapter (sixty pages, forty-five pages, and twenty-five pages, respectively). However, clearly marked divisions with wide margins and small pages compensate for this feature. Hyde has treated his subject with tact and sympathy towards those who desire to use images as media without compromising his own position. The tone of the book is predominantly positive rather than polemic, and the author’s winsome manner adds to the value of the work.

Hyde begins by rejecting images of any or all three Persons of the Godhead (Westminster Larger Catechism 109), first from Scripture and then from the primary historic Reformed Confessions (this is the pattern followed in every chapter). His use of Scripture is thorough and profound. Hyde demonstrates by way of a biblical-theological tour of the Bible that Satan

has most often led people into sin and idolatry by appealing to *sight*, in contrast to *faith* in God’s Word. Sight is a gift from God that is designed to culminate in the *beatific vision* of God himself (32–33), but this vision must wait for the life to come. In the Old Testament, Hyde carefully highlights the repeated manner in which Satan tempted man into sin by examining Genesis 3 and 6, Exodus 32, and Numbers 21 with 2 Kings 18 as prominent examples (33–39). By the time Hyde provides a thorough exposition of the Second Commandment (42–49) and many other Old Testament passages before moving on to the New Testament evidence, his biblical-theological progression has been so well constructed that his conclusion that images of the Godhead remain prohibited in the New Testament is quite natural. His exegesis of Acts 17 is particularly valuable, especially in answering the biblical claims of Jeff Meyers, among others (53–56). The shift to an image-driven culture has been used by Satan to inflict harm upon the Church. Hyde furthermore cites Neil Postman as implying that the shift from a Word-centered to an image-centered culture has endangered people’s ability to think abstractly in general (41).

With regard to the historic Reformed position, Hyde notes the astonishing claim by Jeffrey Meyers that there is no “train of published works stretching back to the Reformation” against images of Christ (70). Hyde responded to this with an impressive array of citations from early Reformed authors and confessional statements, as well as several fathers of the early church (70–88). This section is highly valuable in many respects. It should be noted as well that Hyde thoroughly dispels the assertion (that many are currently making) that the Reformed Confessions prohibit *worshipping* images of Christ, but not *making* images of him (84–85). One thing that could have been expanded usefully in this chapter is the passing reference to the prohibition in the Westminster Larger Catechism against making images inwardly in the mind. This is a continually recurring obstacle to the entire teaching in the minds of many. The sum of the chapter is that we must walk by faith and not by sight, until we are blessed with the *beatific vision* in glory.

Chapter two demonstrates the fact that popular culture and philosophy has gradually become the modern philosophy of ministry (91). By contrast, the Church must return to the philosophy of ministry established by the New Testament, which centers upon the Christ-centered preaching of the Word of God. This chapter on the preaching of the Word is the longest chapter in the book and may stand as a useful summary of the heart of Reformed preaching in its own right. When the Word is preached truly, the people hear Christ speaking through his Word (Rom. 10). When Christ is lifted up in preaching, he is more clearly represented to the faith of those who hear than any image can achieve (Gal. 3). Seeing Christ’s death in actuality could not have been more efficacious than receiving him

through the preached Word (110). Of course, this demands that all true preaching be Christ-centered (99). If this method is unpopular, the Church must imitate Christ in being willing to lose followers (as he did in John 6) for the sake of obedience to the truth (96). In other words, the question of the primacy of preaching is not determined pragmatically, but dogmatically; not by experience, but by Scripture.

One thing that highlights the importance of obedience to the command to preach is that drama was also popular in the days of the apostle Paul (101–102). Based primarily upon 1 Corinthians 1 and 2, Hyde demonstrates that the rejection of art as a medium for communicating the gospel has never been a pragmatic consideration. Through a careful exegesis of this passage, he concludes that the method, messenger, manner, and message of art and films are contrary to the gospel (106). The question is not what God may or may not use for the good of souls, since God uses all things, including evil, to produce good. The confidence of the Church must rest only upon what God has commanded. According to Hyde, Christ speaking through the preaching of the Word is what ought to truly “move” souls (102). With regard to the manner of preaching, this implies that preaching is not merely a doctrinally sound theological lecture, but that preaching must be lively (120, 110). There is a “real presence” of the Spirit of God in biblical preaching (121).

Towards the end of chapter 2, Hyde includes an interesting discussion of catechetical preaching (122–125). This section demonstrates the historical reasons behind catechetical preaching as well as the practical value of such preaching. Hyde noted, “The practice of Heidelberg in holding a second service on the Lord’s Day in which public catechesis was conducted was a feature of all Reformed churches” (123). This may be overstating the case. I am not aware, for example, of Reformed churches in England or Scotland that required catechetical preaching at that time. If “Reformed” refers exclusively to denominations with “Reformed” in their name, then this might be true, but if so, then this should be clarified. That being said, Hyde has done an excellent job in this chapter of returning preaching to its rightful place in Scripture, history, and the Church. He has argued decisively that communicating the gospel through visual media cannot stand alongside of the preached Word as an additional or alternate means of grace.

The last chapter expounds the biblical and Reformed view of receiving the sacraments as the only “visible word” instituted and permitted by God. Hyde’s exposition of the Sacraments is useful in itself, but it is less profoundly tied to the primary thesis of his book. His full exposition of the sacraments goes somewhat beyond the thesis of rejecting images of Christ for the sake of using God’s means of grace. However, Hyde’s citations of confessional documents and various Reformed authors is very illuminating and useful.

The Sacraments are the only visual media *permitted* by God to communicate the gospel because they are the only visual media that have been *prescribed* by God to communicate the gospel. Even in the case of the Sacraments, however, the Word of God is always the root of their efficacy.

The book concludes with the assertion that by resting in the prescribed means of Word and Sacrament in the face of our image-driven culture, “we are led to becoming a contented people. As pilgrims in the wilderness without an ultimate resting place in this life, we must not covet that which God has not given us nor what the world tells us that we need. Instead, as children of our heavenly Father, we are to be content with his means of creating faith in us and confirming us in faith” (161).

Finally Hyde adds,

If this sounds foolish to you, then you are right. God has determined to work in foolish ways. Accordingly, no one can say our religion is about us, is about great crowds, or is about money. It is about Christ, who, though we have not seen him, will reveal himself in glory from heaven and take us to his side for eternity. Let us not attempt a sneak peek on canvas, in clay, on paper, or on the silver screen, but let us with great anticipation await the day when we will see him as he truly is, in living color (163).

In Living Color is much more thorough than most other works on images of Christ. It is profoundly Scriptural, rooted in historic Reformed Christianity, and thoroughly conversant with a broad range of scholarship. Hyde has accomplished all of this without sacrificing readability. From now on, this shall be the first book that I direct people to who have questions regarding images of Christ. If you have questions regarding images of Christ, you must read this book. If you are connected to the Reformed or Presbyterian Standards in some manner, then read this book to foster the conviction that the teaching of these Standards is rooted in Scripture. And above all, read this book if you desire to have a greater appreciation for the Preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. ■

Review: J. van Genderen and W.H. Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2008). 922 pages. ISBN 9780875525778. \$59.99. Reviewed by James E. Dolezal, Ph.D. candidate in systematic theology, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

Concise Reformed Dogmatics is the English translation of the original Dutch edition (*Beknopte Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*) published in 1992. Inasmuch as the authors are relative unknowns to English speaking students of theology the

appearance of this translation has had little fanfare. But this should not lead us to conclude that this volume is insignificant. Indeed, it is a fresh and refreshing piece of scholarship. The authors both previously taught at the Theological University of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in Apeldoorn. J. van Genderen (now deceased) was professor of dogmatics, the history of doctrine, and symbolics (creeds) while W. H. Velema (currently professor emeritus) taught apologetics, ethics, and homiletics. All but three chapters of *CRD* were written by van Genderen. The tome is ordered following the plan of a traditional systematic theology covering the whole range of theological *loci* through its fifteen chapters including: revelation, Scripture, God, creation, man in God's image, sin, the person and work of Christ, the Covenant of Grace, salvation, the Church, the means of grace, and eschatology. Given the breadth of discussion found in this book this review intends only to offer a general appraisal with a few specific observations on a particular strength and weakness.

Van Genderen and Velema define dogma as, "*doctrine that the church, under appeal to the Word of God, holds to be normative*" (1, emphasis theirs). That is, "*Dogma expresses succinctly what the church views as central and essential in the biblical message. Dogmatics analyses, presents arguments, and elucidates*" (5, emphasis theirs). While many would agree with these basic descriptions of dogma and the task of dogmatics the challenge is to strike a proper sense of balance and proportion. What should systematic theology aim to accomplish? What should mark its treatment of the various topics? The authors propose six characteristic features of dogmatic theology: it should be ecclesiastical, confessional, systematic, critical, timely, and practical (6–12). These six emphases well represent the tone of the entire volume. For that reason we will consider each in turn.

Characteristic Features Of Dogmatics

1. *Its ecclesiastical character.* "Without the church there would be no dogma. Actually there could be no dogmatics either, but only strictly personal statements of doctrine" (6). By this the authors mean that the work of systematic theology is a ministry demanded by the church. Though doctrine certainly speaks authoritatively to the church, the work of the theologian is to *serve* the church. Systematic theology "needs indeed to be reminded from time to time that its function is to minister" (6). The authors qualify this point by observing that, "This does not mean that the task of dogmatics should always be viewed in such a narrow ecclesiastical sense that all questions not directly affecting the church should be ignored by it" (6). The more apparent needs of the local congregation, denomination, or present generation are not the final measure of what dogmatics should aim to address. It may be that

there are doctrinal challenges the church will face in the future that she does not currently experience. Notwithstanding the fact that dogmatics often attends to questions of doctrine extending beyond the church's more apparent and immediate concerns, it is still an ecclesiastical ministry.

2. *Its confessional character.* This characteristic is implied by the churchly quality just mentioned (6). Dogmatic theology invariably reveals the confessional, or non-confessional, viewpoint of its authors. This is why these authors have purposely chosen to qualify their dogmatic tome as "Reformed" as opposed to the fuzzier (because non-confessional) appellations, "Evangelical," "Christian," or "Protestant." Inasmuch as "Reformed" indicates "confessional," the authors openly avow their commitment to the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dordt). References to these ecclesiastical standards abound throughout the volume (e.g., 3–4, 47–48, 112–114, 129–130, 220–222, 231–233, 483–845, 502–503, 747–748, 872–873, etc.). This conspicuous attachment to the familiar doctrines of the Three Forms of Unity is especially useful for lay readers who may be unfamiliar with many of the special or technical aspects of traditional theological *loci*. It gives them a recognizable point of theological reference. Additionally, it serves as a good reminder to theological students and ministers of the adequacy of the Reformed standards in approaching a host of theological issues and controversies. Our churchly standards are a lively source for our more technical and critical theologizing. Even so, the authors point out, dogmatics must go beyond the confession: "It must go to Scripture itself in order to 'bring forth' out of that 'treasure things new and old'" (6). By going "beyond" the confession the authors certainly do not mean to imply a dogmatics that opposes the confession. Their point seems to be that dogmatics simply aims to say *more* than the confession may say on a given point.

3. *Its systematic character.* Dogmatics attempts, so far as is humanly possible in this life, to speak of God and his ways in an orderly fashion. Van Genderen and Velema are hesitant to follow Herman Bavinck in denominating dogmatics as a "scientific system" of the knowledge of God. In their view, to call such knowledge "scientific" appears to suggest that we may have a comprehensive knowledge of God. They write, "Even if we take a systematic approach, a scientific system of the knowledge of God does not lie within our reach" (7). In truth, their fears are misplaced in this instance inasmuch as Bavinck, in following the Medieval and Reformed scholastics in his use of the term "scientific," never aims for a creaturely comprehension of God. Anyhow, the authors seem more favorable toward Hendrikus Berkhof's depiction of dogmatics as "the systematic thinking through the relationship that God in Christ has established with us" (6). From the present reviewer's perspective this anti-scientific portrayal of the systematic

character of dogmatics is too reductionistic if one aims to treat the full range of theological *loci*. In placing relationship at the center there follows the risk of being overly anti-metaphysical, and indeed these authors fall prey to this in places (esp. in their doctrine of God). In all fairness, though, this amounts only to a minor detraction from the overall quality of the volume.

4. *Its critical character.* “The critical task of dogmatics follows directly from the nature of dogmas” (7). Theology that is “critical in a responsible way” is constantly testing the church’s doctrine by the standard of Scripture. This entails a careful reading of one’s own tradition as well as the positions staked out by other traditions and theologians. In this connection the authors specifically identify Karl Barth and Hendrikus Berkhof as their two primary interlocutors. Other theologians who figure prominently in the volume are John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, Klaas Schilder, G. C. Berkouwer, H. M. Kuitert, and A. A. van Ruler along with a host of lesser Dutch luminaries. Also, there is extensive critical interaction with various confessions (Protestant and Roman Catholic) and some of the more recent Dutch Reformed synodical productions in the Netherlands. The critical nature of the volume is not entirely of the negative or destructive sort. There is a charitable tone that is willing to recognize elements of truth even in those documents and personalities with whom the authors sharply disagree.

5. *Its timely character.* Though “continuity must take precedence over currency,” dogmatics must not shirk its responsibility to engage new questions and face current problems (8). The authors profess, “In our dogmatics we try to formulate what Scripture teaches us and the church confesses in such a way that it is intelligible to our contemporaries” (9). In this task the authors succeed admirably, striking a fine balance between listening to and appropriating the Reformed and catholic tradition and bringing that testimony to bear on modern theological concerns. Some examples of the latter include: their exposition and critique of Hendrikus Berkhof’s and H. M. Kuitert’s concept of divine revelation as human encounter with God (33–40); their organic theory of inspiration as opposed to the mechanistic, dualistic, dynamic, and actualistic theories (78–83); their insightful analysis and rebuttal of Barth’s and Berkouwer’s conception of election and reprobation (222–228); their critical survey of various Christian approaches to evolution and creationism (265–276); their argument for a more redemptively-oriented notion of common grace in culture and mild criticisms of both Kuyper’s and Schilder’s positions (294–297); their criticism of the universalist tendencies in Barth’s, H. Berkhof’s, and Kuitert’s understanding of the Covenant of Grace (542–545); their confutation of some recent defective views of justification including those proffered by the 1963 Lutheran World Council, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, H. Berkhof, and H. Wiersema (631–640);

a fine analysis of diverse Dutch Reformed views on the nature of the Church including those of Kuyper, Schilder, J. C. Hoekendijk, and H. Berkhof (689–693); and finally, an assessment of some recent eschatological positions including A. Schweitzer’s “consistent” eschatology, C. H. Dodd’s realized eschatology, Barth’s transcendental eschatology, Bultmann’s existential eschatology, Moltmann’s eschatology of hope, and Karl Rahner’s contrasting of eschatological futurism and actualism (824–826). These examples are merely samples of the many timely discussions interspersed throughout the volume. It should be observed that these discussions of recent views inevitably reflect the authors’ own place and time as continental Dutch Reformed churchmen and theologians of the second half of the twentieth century. Given their desire to engage the issues most relevant to Reformed theology in the Netherlands the tome manifests a distinctly provincial character. One finds little interaction with either British or North American controversies and authors. Furthermore, some of the positions that are of immediate concern to these writers are virtually unknown to the English readership of this translation. And though this provincial quality may be a source of discouragement to some readers, the upshot is that van Genderen and Velema have given us a fine model of how Reformed confessionalism can engage current and relevant theological disputes while retaining a solid commitment to historic orthodoxy. Furthermore, their treatment of uniquely Dutch controversies and denominational disputes can only serve to broaden and enrich the outlook of those of us unfamiliar with the particulars of these debates.

What emerges in the authors’ attempt to be “timely” is often a fresh articulation and nuance of the Reformed faith that avoids novelty. It also drives them back to the biblical text as that ever-fruitful source of dogmatics: “Exegesis repeatedly confronts dogmatics with questions and continually opens up new perspectives” (8). This conviction of the timeliness of the timeless Word results in extensive interpretation of biblical passages that advance well beyond supplying needed proof-texts. In this connection the authors warn of attempts to be relevant at the expense of being biblical: “Dogmatic theology is always in communication with the thought patterns of its time, but by simply taking over a philosophical way of thinking one runs the great risk that the biblical content loses in significance” (9). Thus they alert us to the dangers of Neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism, Cartesianism, Hegelianism, Neo-Kantianism, and modern existentialism. If Reformed dogmatics is to be current and relevant it must speak intelligibly to these philosophies without succumbing to their anti-Christian methods and presuppositions.

6. *Its practical character.* Van Genderen and Velema endorse the conclusion of the *Leiden Synopsis* that theology is both theoretical and practical, concerning both knowledge

and the service of God. It is theoretical insofar as it is a scholarly pursuit and practical in that its aim is to serve the church and the life of faith. “We may never,” they remind us, “lose sight of the connection between doctrine and life” (9). But they hasten to add, “[W]e must, however, oppose the notion of the primacy of praxis that has a large number of proponents in newer theology” (9). In placing the premium on *praxis* many moderns, even some professing the Reformed faith, have fallen under the sway of Immanuel Kant who “judged that only that which is acceptable and useful from a practical point of view can be considered to be appropriate for faith in modern times” (10). The danger is that “usefulness” abandons its place as a consequent of theology and, instead, asserts itself as a source and criterion for dogmatics. Matters are further complicated by the fact that what is truly useful is conceived differently by various theologians: “The particular kind of praxis may vary from political decisions to mystical experiences” (10). The authors fault H. M. Kuitert, along with Pannenberg and Moltmann, for abandoning the *principium* of Scripture and replacing it with anthropology and sociology. The practical side of dogmatics is not the principle of theology, but the consequent.

It follows, then, that the authors are opposed to subsuming ethics under dogmatics. On this point they cite Karl Barth disapprovingly: “Dogmatics itself is ethics; and ethics is dogmatics” (11; in Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1.2.793). Of course, “There is no such thing as nondogmatic ethics, or ethics without a definite doctrinal content. Neither is there nonethical dogmatics or dogmatics without a certain ethical import” (11). But, formally considered, dogmatics is about right *understanding* drawn from Scripture. So how is it that the authors still insist at all upon the *practical* character of dogmatics? Are they simply sneaking ethics in the back door? We must conclude that this is not the case. Van Genderen and Velema are merely concerned to remind us that all truth to be believed is “truth for us personally” (9). This translates into a discernable pastoral tone. Throughout the various *loci* they engage numerous practical concerns by attempting to clarify what are, for some, troubling or confusing dogmas. Some examples include: whether or not one’s name may be blotted out of the book of life (216); their judicious and encouraging treatment of the relation between election and the proclamation of the gospel (236–239) and between election and assurance (240–243); salient insights on the relationship between the law and the gospel in preaching (433) and their reminder that “we ... may not systematize the way in which the Spirit brings someone to repentance” (434); the pastoral reminder that the necessity of Christ’s satisfaction “is related to a deep awareness of the reality of the wrath of God over our sins” (524); their explanation of how the Sermon on the Mount radicalizes the Decalogue (656); a lucid account of the place of

the Word in the church (757–779); and their helpful explanation of worthy participation in the Lord’s Supper (813). This is not a volume of pastoral theology, but the obvious pastoral concern of the authors is one of *CRD*’s distinguishing assets.

These six characteristics, identified by the authors themselves, fairly well describe what readers can expect throughout the volume. The sheer size and sophistication of this work defies any attempt at a single comprehensive review. For that reason we now proceed to consider a representative strength and a weakness.

Comment On A Strength And A Weakness

Undoubtedly, one of the outstanding chapters in *CRD* is chapter 8: “Man as the Image of God” (314–384). Richard B. Gaffin writes of this chapter, “[T]he entire treatment of the image of God ... is most penetrating” (from “Epistemological Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2:6–16,” in *Revelation and Reason*, eds. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton, p. 36). Their treatment begins, as we would expect, with an investigation of the relevant biblical passages (316–332). From these they conclude that the *imago Dei* is both lost and retained in fallen man: “There is simultaneously complete discontinuity and continuity. We formulate this complex situation as follows: sinful man displays the image of God in a negative mode. The fallen child cannot renounce its descent, even though it seeks in every possible way to blot out the memory of the Father. Sin is the refusal to display the image of the Father and to make the image visible in relation to fellow humans and creation” (332). The image is both ontological and moral. The authors declare, “We reject the separation between ontic, structural, substantial aspects on the one hand and functional, relational aspects on the other hand” (332). Rejecting the separation does not mean they reject the validity of the distinction. They simply intend to maintain that the obligations (as children and servants of the King) attendant to the *imago* remain in force upon the man *as man*.

Furthermore, they insist, both aspects of the *imago* have been impaired. Thus, man continues in the image of God, but only, as they say, “in a negative mode” (359). As image, man still has an implanted desire for relationship that only God can satisfy. The authors identify this as an ontic inclination: “Man is inclined to this relationship with God. He cannot undo his structural disposition, even if he breaks this relationship. In man as human being created in relationship with God there is a yearning to fill the empty place resulting from his rebellion against God” (359). We detect in this explanation of man as image in the negative mode something of Calvin’s notion of the *semen religionis*. No matter how hard he tries fallen man cannot divest himself of this image. The image is a constant reminder to him of his origins and his intended purpose: “Even when man does not honor his Creator, he cannot live

outside this structure, apart from this relationship” (361). The authors do a fine job establishing that the *imago Dei* is the basis for natural man’s *sensus divinitatis*, though one unfortunate misstatement in this connection should be noted: “This knowledge is not done justice. It is rejected before it reaches man” (362). At the risk of petty critique it is simply observed that the knowledge is not rejected *before* it reaches man, but *after*. The knowledge of God that sinful man suppresses is knowledge that he actually possesses (Rom. 1:18–21). Indeed, it is the actual possession of this knowledge of God that leaves them without excuse. The authors seem to accept this elsewhere in their discussion when they describe this suppression of knowledge as “the negative mode of the knowledge of God” (363). Their identification of sinful man as image in the “negative mode” is helpfully applied to other aspects of the *imago* such as human freedom (364–368), man’s social relationships (368–374), and his relation to the environment (374–381). All said, this chapter is a bracing piece of scholarship overflowing with fresh ways of articulating the Reformed understanding of the *imago Dei*.

In spite of its generally superior quality and scholarship, *CRD*, as one might expect with any comprehensive study of dogmatics, is not without its shortcomings. One liability in particular is the authors’ infrequent disparagement of metaphysics and philosophy. Their warnings against allowing abstract philosophy to undermine the primacy of the biblical witness are well taken (13–14), though it occasionally leads the authors to devalue some of the more technical scholastic formulations that the church has historically found highly useful (we might even say *necessary* in the Christological and Trinitarian controversies) for articulating the faith in a clear and relevant way. On this account the authors are mildly critical of the Reformed scholastics, and even of Herman Bavinck, for their supposed allowance of philosophical abstractions in their theologizing. On Bavinck’s treatment of the divine attributes, for instance, they write, “But here and there in the sections that are devoted to the attributes of God, their biblical-theological content risks being crowded out by metaphysics, which renders the doctrine of God too abstract. Although Bavinck was on his guard against this danger, he did not altogether escape it” (135). Must metaphysics invariably tend toward abstractions? Could it not, in service to biblical revelation, be a conceptual and linguistic tool by which we carefully nuance what Scripture teaches? The authors do appear open to this positive use of philosophy when writing of the Trinity: “Trinity (*trinitas*) is a word that does not occur in the Bible, but that the church began to use because it saw a need for it. Originally Being and person were indeed Greek concepts, but subsequently acquired biblical content” (153). And yet within the space of a few pages they return to plying the false antithesis between philosophy as abstract and

theology as dynamic and concrete. They write, “The doctrine of the Trinity gives us an impression of the richness of God’s life. He is not Being itself or the Ground of Existence. Neither is he the Highest Good or the Supreme Being. He is the living God, who is compassionate in himself. In himself he is a God of communion. God is love. Behind his acts of love and grace in time stands his eternal love” (160). The juxtapositions in this passage are unhelpful and confusing. To speak of God as Being itself (*Ipsum Esse*), the Ground of Existence (*principium essendi*), the Highest Good (*summum bonum*) and Supreme Being in no way undermines the fullness and richness of his divine life. But to deny these grand realities in order to amplify their emphasis on God’s living fullness is counterproductive. It undercuts the absoluteness of his simple self-subsistence to make him appear more relational and personal and it wrongly assumes that “being” as such must always indicate something abstract. Rather, it seems to this reviewer that the genius of the catholic and Reformed tradition is in taking over Greek notions of being and essence and loading them with biblical presuppositions so that the triune personal God is at once the ground of all being and the dynamic source of love and compassion. These notions are not in tension in God. Understanding God as Absolute Being entails understanding Absolute Being as thoroughly personal. It follows, then, that metaphysics need not have an abstracting tendency that detracts from God’s love and his redemptive grace.

In sum, the authors seem to have imbibed a non-lethal dose of the “Calvin versus the Calvinists” tonic which motivates their anti-metaphysical outlook. Additionally, it may be their relative approximation of G. C. Berkouwer’s theological method that leads them down this path (e.g., their pitting of theological doctrine against Scripture, 189; cf. their rejection of the *via eminentiae*, the *via negationis*, and the *via causalitatis* as valid approaches to theology, 165), though Berkouwer is much more viciously anti-metaphysical than van Genderen and Velema. All things considered, this is a minor shortcoming in light of the immense insight, originality, and orthodoxy of these authors.

A Brief Comment On Editing And Format

Through the entire volume *CRD* alternates between two different font sizes. The purpose is to present the main points in the larger font and the more technical discussions in the smaller. In this way readers can forego the more technical or polemical sections if so desired. It may also help the lay reader who might otherwise be discouraged by these more difficult sections. The text reads smoothly either way. The sections of smaller text are fitted quite naturally into the main discussion presented in the larger font.

Another benefit is that the editors have replaced some of the volumes originally cited in Dutch and German (e.g.,

Bavinck and Barth) with the accessible English translations, giving up to date editions and page numbers. Unfortunately, this updating has left out some volumes which have been translated to English (including volumes by W. Pannenberg, H. Ridderbos, K. Schilder, and others). A more complete updating to available English editions would have been useful. The book includes a comprehensive scripture index and an extensive name and subject index.

Concise Reformed Dogmatics should prove to be a boon to ministers, elders, theological students, and interested laymen and will almost certainly attain a place on the short list of preferred single-volume studies in Reformed dogmatics. ■

Review: Charles E. Hill, *From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp: Identifying Irenaeus' Apostolic Presbyter and the Author of ad Diognetum*. Vol. 186, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). 207 pages (incl. index). ISBN 978-3161486999. 49€. Reviewed by Rev. Dr. R. Scott Clark, Professor of Church History and Historical Theology at Westminster Seminary California., and an ordained minister in the United Reformed Churches.

The treatise *ad Diognetum* (to Diognetus) written anonymously by Mathetes (the disciple) is one of the most fascinating of the works included in the standard collections of the Apostolic Fathers.¹ One supposes that Johannes Quasten's account of the "epistle" (more on that below) of Mathetes to Diognetus fairly represents the view accepted for most of the twentieth century. First, he treats the treatise as if it were an epistle by an unknown author dependent upon Irenaeus. Some of the possible authors reviewed by Quasten include Hippolytus of Rome and Quadratus.² He concludes his survey of the treatise by saying the

epistle deserves to rank among the most brilliant and beautiful works of Christian Greek literature. The writer is a master of rhetoric, his sentence structure is full of charm and subtly balanced, his style limpid. The content reveals a man of fervent faith and wide knowledge, a mind thoroughly imbued with the principles of Christianity. The diction sparkles with fire and vitality (Quasten, *Patrology*, 1.251–252).

Hubertus Drobner's 1994 survey reflects some of the developments in modern scholarship, including an acknowledgement that it was probably not an epistle at all. It was an apologetic treatise the textual history of which is complicated by the fact that the only known exemplar of the treatise, which was discovered in a Constantinople fish shop in the fifteenth century, was destroyed in a fire in Strasbourg in the nineteenth century (Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church*, 75). Drobner,

however, does not comment on the authorship of the work. The 1995 survey by Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli explains that it was Henri Estienne (1592) who first described *ad Diognetum* as an epistle,³ but that designation, despite its popularity,⁴ is inaccurate. Neither is it an apologia. It is, they argue, a "protreptic," i.e. "an invitation to accept the Christian faith" (*Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 1.210). They locate the work in Asia Minor or Rome and assign it to the period before Constantine. They too are impressed with the quality of the rhetoric and of the author's command of Greek: "it is certainly the best Greek to be found in the writings of the apologists" (ibid.)

For the reader not intimately familiar with the work it may be helpful to observe that *ad Diognetum* is in twelve chapters. Chapters 1–10 contain five major themes: against paganism (chapter 2), against Jewish worship and customs (chapters 3–4), Christian distinctiveness (chapters 5–7), God's Son as the revelation of God and Savior (chapters 8–9), and a call to imitate God.⁵ Chapters 11 and 12 are usually identified as a distinct section of the treatise. Holmes describes this section as a "Homily on the Word" (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 715).

Who wrote this powerful, elegant, this "boldest and most self-aware undertaking in second-century Christian apologetics" (*Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 1.212)? This is the basic question that Charles Hill, Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando) and well-published patristics scholar, undertakes to answer in a brief but dense and closely argued monograph.

He argues that the author of *ad Diognetum* is none other than Polycarp († c. 155–160) (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 272). He draws upon Polycarp's biography and teaching through Polycarp's epistle to the Philippian congregation (c. 120). He also appeals to the Martyrdom of Polycarp, from which we

1. It has been included among the apostolic father since the 1592 edition of Henri Estienne. See Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers, 2007) 75. See also Oscar de Gebhardt, et al., eds., *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera, Editio Post Dresseliana Alteram Tertiam ed.*, 3 vols., vol. 2, *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1887); Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers. Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); A. Cleveland Coxe, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers, 9 vols., vol. 1, Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950).

2. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 4 vols. (Utrecht and Westminster, Md.: Spectrum and The Newman Press, 1962) 1.248–249.

3. Claudio Moreschini, and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, 2 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005) 1.210.

4. E.g. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 686–687 describes *ad Diognetus* as an epistle.

5. These themes are adapted from the chapter headings in Holmes, ed. *Apostolic Fathers*, 695–714.

have a detailed account of Polycarp's death. There are other sources for our knowledge of Polycarp including Irenaeus' recollections which, Hill argues, are reflected in *Adversus Haereses* (2–3; hereafter AH).

His argument is in two somewhat distinct (and distinguishable stages). First he identifies the "Presbyter" to whom Irenaeus referred and to whom he appealed and identifies him as Polycarp. In the second part of the work, Hill makes his direct case for Polycarp as the author of *ad Diognetum*. On the face of it, identifying the author of *ad Diognetum* is a formidable task. In 1965 H. I. Marrou presented no fewer than fifteen possible authors. Hill recognizes this problem and says, "I do not myself present the case with quite the same degree of certitude as I believe is warranted by the argument of Part One, for the identification of Irenaeus' elder in AH 4.27.1–32.1. . . . Yet I am bringing forward Polycarp's name because I believe the evidence presses us to consider it seriously" (97). Even if one does not agree with Hill's identification of Polycarp as the author, Hill is surely right to say that "a fresh examination of the form and character of the *ad Diognetum*, and an exploration of the parallels between this document and Polycarp of Smyrna can yield valuable results for a sociological and historical understanding of this important document and its environment" (98). The author begins by building the connection between Irenaeus and Polycarp. He writes,

In Irenaeus' view the presbyters, indeed are the essential links between the apostles and the apostolic teaching, on the one hand, and the faithful churches of Irenaeus' day on the other. Even the notion of apostolic succession as held by Irenaeus has to do first of all with the presbyters, and not simply with those presbyters who are bishops, for it is the presbyters who are the guardians of apostolic teaching (AH, 3.2.2; 4.26.2; 32.1; 5.20.2; Proof 3). And for Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, there is no one in the body of the church's presbyters since the apostles as prominent as his former teacher, Polycarp of Smyrna (7).

According to Irenaeus, Polycarp "knew and was ordained by apostles" and Hill argues that Polycarp is an important but unidentified source for Irenaeus' knowledge of the Apostolic doctrine (7–8). He builds his case for this connection by analyzing Irenaeus' use of oral teaching from an unidentified ancient presbyter who knew the apostles. He addresses some text-critical questions in Irenaeus' AH (4.27–32), which, when resolved properly favor identifying a single presbyter as the source (8–10). He identifies several connections and correspondences between Polycarp's teaching and that of the presbyter mentioned by Irenaeus (e.g. anti-Marcionite

themes; 11–17). The author argues at length from connections between the Letter to Florinus and AH to establish further the connection between Irenaeus and Polycarp. He answers the most obvious question, namely, if Irenaeus had contact with Polycarp and the latter had connections to the apostles, why did Irenaeus withhold Polycarp's name? Hill gives a few reasons: Irenaeus habitually withheld names of respected ecclesiastical authorities when he knew them (23). Irenaeus seems to have assumed that the reader would make the connection for himself (23). Third, he had just identified Polycarp in a previous treatise *On the Sole Sovereignty* (23). Fourth, it was not Polycarp's person but his office he wished to emphasize (24).

Among the other connections cited by Hill are the order and arrangement of lists of heretics in AH with the way similar material is presented in the Martyrdom of Polycarp (27). He notes a particular connection between the critique of Cerinthus in both documents (28–30) and the treatment of Marcion in both (30–31; 32–71). Among the more fascinating arguments is Hill's analysis of the function of the "descendit ad inferos" in the anti-Marcionite arguments of Irenaeus and Polycarp (e.g., pp. 85–94). They were responding to the Marcionite corruption of the descensus whereby Christ was said to have gone to Hades in order to save people "like Cain, the Sodomites, and the Egyptians" while "men like Abel, Enoch, Noah, the patriarchs, and prophets . . . did not partake in salvation" (42). To respond to this account, the presbyter (Polycarp) "accepted the concept of Christ's descensus ad inferos so widely known in the early church" (42). It was an adaptation of Paul's language in Ephesians 4:9 and possibly by the "Jeremiah apocryphon cited earlier by Irenaeus in [AH] 4.22.1" (43). More likely, Hill acknowledges, is the influence of 1 Peter 4:6. The language used by Irenaeus in these places resonates with the language of Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians (44). The benefit of re-assessing the connection between Irenaeus and Polycarp is that, in this light, we now have greater access to and knowledge of Polycarp's teaching (70–71). Irenaeus did not reproduce the *ipsisima verba* of Polycarp but there is evidence that Irenaeus memorized Polycarp's anti-Marcionite teaching (71, see also pp.80–82). This line of argumentation clarifies the chronological relations between Irenaeus and Polycarp so that we may be more certain that the date of Polycarp's martyrdom was 155 or 156 (73). This connection also illumines Irenaeus eschatology (77–80, 83–85). Hill argues that Irenaeus' chiliasm was a response to the Valentinian heresy. Because of the extreme anti-materialism of the dualists, Irenaeus adopted a materialist, this-worldly, eschatology. For more on this see his work on early Christian eschatology.⁶ Indeed, it appears that Irenaeus' eschatology in the first four books of AH was non-chiliasitic. He speculates that it may have been the influence of Papias that helped to lead him to chiliasm in book 5

6. Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christian Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; Second edition, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

(77–78). Significantly, Hill traces Irenaeus' earlier, non-chiliasm eschatology to Polycarp's influence (85).

The heart of the work, however, is the direct argument for Polycarp as the author of *ad Diognetum*. He begins by surveying possible dates for the origin of *ad Diognetum* (98–101). The predominant views tend to locate the work either c. 140–150 (which favors Polycarp as author) or 190–200 (e.g. Marrou et al). He analyzes the form of the work not as an epistle, as frequently thought, but rather as a “transcript of an oral address” given “outside a judicial context” (101–106). Notably, there is no appeal to stop persecution. “The only plea it contains is a plea for conversion to Christianity” (102).

If it is difficult to identify the author of *ad Diognetum*, how much more difficult is it to identify Diognetus? Some have conjectured that he might even have been a purely literary creation. If, however, *ad Diognetum* is a transcript of an address, it seems most likely that Diognetus was an actual person. Since “there is no obvious reason to question the self-presentation of the work” (105), Hill concludes that he was a probably a contemporary of Polycarp, in Smyrna (162). The evidence for this is an inscription which has been overlooked by other scholars (162–164).

Hill next turns to the literary unity of the address (106–114). There is not space in this review to work through his arguments here except to say that he concludes that “the most realistic and promising approach” to the text-critical problems is to think that we are missing one sheet of a unified work (113–114).

As to the stylistic differences between the first section (chapters 1–10) and the second (11–12) Hill argues: “The consistent impression in both parts is that we are dealing with an oral address explaining Christianity given by a Christian teacher in the presence of one who has requested it, probably a man of some high social rank named Diognetus” (116). The change in tone in the last two chapters is accounted for by the nature of protreptic address. “It should not be surprising, then, to find in a work such as this a certain progression or even a transition in the attitude of the hearer assumed or hoped for by the speaker/author” (118). In other words, Polycarp's tone changes as he anticipates the conversion of Diognetus (118–120). Hill shows that early Christian authors in this period routinely assumed rather significant knowledge of Scripture on the part of non-Christian readers (121–127). If Hill's hypothesis about the identity of Diognetus is correct, it appears that “the protreptic efforts of the author of *ad Diognetum* did not meet with their intended results” (165).

The penultimate chapter is devoted to the case for Polycarp as the speaker and Diognetus as the hearer of a semi-public discourse delivered before Diognetus and his entourage (128). To make his case Hill appeals to parallels in the Martyrdom of Polycarp in which Polycarp spoke “as if delivering an oral

address even before a respected public official would not at all be beyond his ability or custom” (128). He argues that Polycarp should not be considered a “rustic” who could not have aspired to such oratory (130). The negative evaluation of Polycarp depends mainly upon an evaluation of his much earlier Epistle to the Philippians. To counteract this perception, Hill appeals to Polycarp's relationship with Florinus as a case where a “member of the ruling class” approached him for an explanation of Christianity (131). There is evidence that Polycarp was known to “others in the upper classes” in Smyrna by c. 108. He was pastor to the children and servants of one high-ranking official (131). There are other names of people with social standing connected to Polycarp (131–133).

The speaker in *ad Diognetum* expressly connected himself to the apostles in 11.1 where he described himself as “a disciple of apostles” (133). “The speaker is at least staking-out a firm place in succession of what he regards as authentic apostolic tradition” (133). According to Irenaeus, when Polycarp went to Rome he “caused many to turn away from the ... heretics to the church of God” (134). He did so by “proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles...” Polycarp appealed to his direct connection with the apostles as part of his attempt to persuade those who had embraced heresy. He also defended his quartodeciman view of Easter (i.e., the custom of always observing Easter on the 14th of Nisan, whatever the day of week and not necessarily on Sunday) partly on the basis of his connection to the apostle John. According to Hill, if “the speaker of *ad Diog.* 11.1–4 is not Polycarp, one could almost say that he is impersonating Polycarp, as the latter is presented by Irenaeus. Could it be that we are reading here from an actual speech made by Polycarp?” (135).

To press home this part of the argument he appeals to correspondences to his only known literary work, the Epistle to the Philippians. He notes the rather unimpressive style of the earlier epistle but accounts for the differences in style by noting the different genres and decades to which the documents belong. The epistles is probably 40 years before the speech (137). Hill notes a similarity of “Paulinism” between the epistle to the Philippians and *ad Diognetus* (138), which was also noted by Pier Franco Beatrice (1990). He also surveys the parallels with 1 Peter and the various Petrine qualities of both documents (139–140) and especially their doctrine of the substitutionary atonement made by Christ.

There are also striking parallels between the Martyrdom of Polycarp and *ad Diognetus*. Both knew of Christians being executed by fire and wild beasts (142). Both teach that entrance into the Kingdom is through the Son (143). Both have a pronounced doctrine of Jesus as the $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (143–147).

Alongside literary parallels which point to Polycarp as the author of *ad Diognetum*, is a line of evidence drawn from the history of the transmission of the treatise/speech. The closest

parallels with the document include, he says, “probable literary relationships ... first in Asia Minor, then in Lyons, and then in Rome” (158). It seems to have been known in Smyrna at the time of Polycarp’s death (159).

The last chapter of the work is a helpful survey gathering up the several and various strands of evidence. By this point it is as if the reader has been watching a detailed legal presentation and the author is making his summation before the jury. A reader expecting an airtight case dispensing with all ambiguity will be disappointed. If, however, the reader enjoys procedural dramas, is interested in broadening his learning in patristics, and is willing to entertain a circumstantial case then time invested in this dense work will be rewarded.

As valuable as the substance of the argument is, perhaps equally valuable is the author’s excellent handling of evidence and of competing arguments. This is the sort of research and presentation of research that one’s teachers told one to write way back when. Good historiography is about getting the facts (remember those pesky things?) right, about interpreting them in context, and from such an interpretation to draw judicious conclusions. The goal is to be led, as much as is possible in this life, by the evidence to a sound and reasonable conclusion. One must constantly die, as it were, to one’s own expectations of how things should “turn out” and give oneself over to the evidence and to following where it leads. This does not happen very often so it is a pleasure to see a historian doing history the way it is meant to be done, even (or perhaps especially) when the evidence leads to conclusions that, because of the circumstantial nature of the evidence, must necessarily be somewhat tentative.

Thus, the author is painstakingly patient with the evidence and with other interpretations. The reader never has the sense that straw men are being set up or that the author is being anything but fair. This way of making his case has the effect of strengthening rather than weakening his argument.

A couple of brief notes in closing. 1) This is a work for specialists to be sure but those who are interested in patristics or in good history, if they are patient, will also benefit. 2) This reader spotted three typos (pp. 42, 77, 99). Perhaps these can be repaired for the second edition. ■

Review: Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) xxix + 930 pages. \$59.99. ISBN 0801026148. Reviewed by Dr. Guy Prentiss Waters, Associate Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS.

Harold Hoehner, late Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary, has produced a substantial commentary on the Greek text of Ephesians. Even

a casual glance at the work is sufficient to impress the reader with the meticulousness of Hoehner’s scholarship. *Ephesians’s* extensive interaction with the literature on this epistle over the last century and a half renders it one of the most thoroughly researched commentaries on Ephesians in print.

These features of *Ephesians* highlight a certain dilemma for the contemporary pastor. Ours is an era of commentaries known for their girth, extensive bibliography, and cost. But the pastor has limited time and limited resources to invest in commentaries for sermon and lesson preparation. He must ask himself certain questions of any new commentary: Is this a work that merits the attention of a Reformed pastor? Is it helpful for purposes of sermon preparation? Does it deserve a place alongside the limited amount of commentary literature that he will be able to study?

With respect to *Ephesians*, the answer to these questions is “yes.” Hoehner’s work has earned its right to a place on the pastor’s study shelf. How, then, may this work be most profitably used? To answer this question, we will ask throughout this review two further questions: What are the strengths or merits of this commentary? What are its shortcomings?

One of the most visible strengths of this commentary is its unapologetic commitment to Pauline authorship of Ephesians. Although Pauline authorship of this epistle was undisputed for nearly 1,800 years, historical-critical scholarship has since called it into question. Hoehner makes a reasoned and substantive case that Paul has authored Ephesians (2–61). In its range of scholarship surveyed and its organization of presentation, this discussion is well suited for the pastor concerned to give a cogent defense of the letter’s authenticity.

One of the most striking features of Hoehner’s discussion is his chart delineating the positions of 279 scholars concerning the authorship of Ephesians (9–18; see the full bibliography at 114–130). One objective of his chart is to demonstrate that, until 1960, “more scholars favored the Pauline authorship of Ephesians than denied it,” and that, only between 1971–2001 has even a slight majority (51%) of scholars denied that Paul wrote Ephesians (20). In other words, contrary to the claims of some historical critical scholars, “acceptance of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians has had a long tradition” (20).

Hoehner devotes extensive attention to refuting claims that the vocabulary, phraseology, and style of Ephesians are incompatible with Pauline authorship (24–29); and that Ephesians is dependent upon Colossians and other letters of Paul (30–38). Hoehner also helpfully responds to David Meade’s argument that what is said to be NT pseudonymity “had its basis in OT and Jewish writings” (41). Not only is there no warrant for positing OT pseudonymity, but the NT itself, followed by the early church, rejected pseudonymous writings as morally fraudulent (40–49). Finally, Hoehner demonstrates that what are alleged to be theological inconsistencies between

Ephesians and the undisputed Pauline letters should instead be understood as “differences in emphasis possibly due to differences in circumstances . . . a phenomenon [that] can also be observed in the undisputed Paulines” (58).

The greatest strength of *Ephesians* is its thorough lexical, grammatical, and syntactical analysis of the Greek text of Ephesians. While Hoehner supplies most pastors with more lexical information than they will likely use, and often fails to synthesize that data for the reader’s benefit, the lexical data are important in at least two regards. First, they assist the reader in tracing Pauline themes or concerns across the letter. Hoehner reminds us that when Paul describes the church as a “holy temple in the Lord” (2:21), the word “holy” has already surfaced at 1:1, 1:4, 1:13, 1:15, 1:18, and 2:19. Second, they assist the reader in tracing Pauline themes or concerns across the whole of Paul’s letters. When Paul commands the Ephesians to be “imitators of God” (5:1), Hoehner calls our attention to Paul’s use of the word μιμητής on six other occasions in his correspondence. The preacher who is interested in calling attention to themes in Scripture that are sometimes signaled lexically, and who is careful to let context and not lexical history determine the meaning of a word in any given instance, will find these data a mine of information.

Hoehner’s grammatical and syntactical analysis is first-rate. Why is such analysis necessary or helpful to the pastor? There are at least two reasons. First, most pastors address audiences who have before them a multiplicity of English translations. Hoehner’s commentary demonstrates that contemporary translations frequently resolve grammatical and syntactical questions in Ephesians differently. One celebrated example is Eph 4:11–12 (ESV, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”). Hoehner shows that there are no fewer than four options in relating the main verb of v.11 (“he gave”) to the three Greek prepositions of v.12 (547–549). These four options are represented in (1) the AV, RSV; (2) the RV, ASV; (3) the NEB, NASB, NRSV; and (4) the TEV, JB, NIV, NJB. After weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each view, Hoehner settles on the view represented in the NIV. Pastors will doubtlessly refrain from overwhelming congregants with the detailed and specialized argumentation that Hoehner offers. They will, however, undoubtedly wish to be aware of the range of renderings of Eph 4:11–12 available, to form their own reasoned judgments, and to frame their own exposition accordingly.

Second, Hoehner’s grammatical and syntactical analysis is helpful to the pastor attempting to explain Paul’s statements to hearers most of whom lack access to or knowledge of the Greek text. For example, Paul addresses the church in 1:1 as “the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus” (ESV). The English translation could lead some readers to

two misunderstandings. First, does Paul establish two groups within the church: “saints” and “those who believe”? No. Paul’s use of a single article (τοῖς), rather, indicates that “holy” and “faithful” define all Christians by profession. Paul has in mind a single group—“the holy-and-faithful-ones.” Second, does Paul, as he elsewhere does, here represent “Christ Jesus” as the object of the believer’s faith? No. The phrase “in Christ Jesus” qualifies the one group (the “holy-and-faithful-ones”). Instead of saying here that Jesus is the one whom believers trust, Paul is saying that believers are holy and faithful, in union with Christ.

Hoehner’s work is also helpful to the minister in digesting recent scholarship concerning the background to certain of Paul’s statements and themes in Ephesians. He offers a helpful survey of the debate concerning the background of “adoption” (υἰοθεσία) at Eph 1:5. Concluding that “adoption” in Ephesians has its background in “Roman law and practice,” Hoehner proceeds to show how that background illuminates the close Pauline connection between predestination and adoption (1:4–5); believers’ deliverance from “responsibility and/or obligation to their old father the devil;” and the “status, privilege, and property” that Paul claims are the possession of believers (196, 197). Hoehner’s brief but wide-ranging survey of slavery in antiquity (800–804) will help pastors explain to contemporary audiences Paul’s admonitions to slaves and masters with care and nuance. His discussion of Roman weaponry and military practice will likewise bring to life Paul’s descriptions of the Christian armament at 6:10–20 (817–866).

Hoehner also provides guidance concerning the structure of Ephesians. Following the familiar division of Ephesians into doctrinal (chaps. 1–3) and hortatory (chaps. 4–6) halves, Hoehner points to themes and terminology that help to stitch the two sections together: “walk,” “love,” “the Spirit,” “body,” “mystery,” and “the evil one” (62–64). Hoehner recognizes and even charts (64, 173–174) the pervasiveness of the phrase “in Christ” (and related phrases) in Ephesians. Regrettably, he does not take the opportunity to develop at any length the importance of this observation. Since union with Christ is at the heart of both the structure and message of Ephesians, Hoehner has missed an opportunity to highlight this foundational component of Pauline theology, and to explore the ways in which Paul has related union with Christ to the other themes and concerns of Ephesians.

Nevertheless, Hoehner’s helpful recognition of the elements that link the two halves of the epistle serves as a reminder that, for Paul, theology and application may be distinguished but never separated. A necessary precondition of biblical application is the Christian’s appropriation of biblical doctrine. The structure of Eph 4:1–6:9 affords an example of this relationship between doctrine and application. Hoehner observes that some form of the phrase “walk therefore” (περιπατεῖν οὖν)

surfaces at 4:1, 4:17, 5:1–2, 5:7–8, and 5:15. He thus entitles the resulting sections “walk in unity (4:1–16), “walk in holiness (4:17–32), “walk in love” (5:1–6), “walk in light” (5:7–14), “walk in wisdom” (5:15–6:9). This structure not only helps the reader understand the continuity of the exhortations within 4:1–6:9, but also the rootedness of these exhortations in Paul’s earlier discussion at Eph 2:1–10, where believers, who “once walked ... in trespasses and sins” (2:1,2) now “walk in ... good works, which God prepared beforehand” (2:10). The walking of believers that Paul describes in Eph 4:1–6:9 is the outworking of the sovereign grace of God in Christ.

Hoehner helps the pastor understand the structure of smaller portions of the letter as well. Eph 1:3–14, for instance, is Trinitarian in its structure. Eph 1:3 declares that the blessings the believer has received are the “provision” of the triune God. Eph 1:4–6, 1:7–12, and 1:13–14 reflect upon the activity of Father, Son, and Spirit, respectively, in purposing, securing, and applying these blessings to the believer (153–161). Eph 4:4–6, in its seven appearances of the word “one” (εἷς, μία, ἓν), serves to reinforce Paul’s call to unity throughout 4:1–16. The invocation of Father (4:6), Son (4:5), and Spirit (4:4) remind the reader that “all seven components [of 4:4–6] are united in the Trinity” (521). These two passages underscore for the reader that, for Paul, there is a decidedly Trinitarian shape not only to the grace of God in the gospel, but also to the unity that the church is called to cultivate and to pursue.

Hoehner’s exegetical conclusions frequently confirm what Reformed theology has found the Scripture to teach. He defends, from the text of Ephesians, the divine election of believers (1:4) as determined solely by the sovereign decree of God, as a pre-temporal choice, and as grounded upon nothing seen or foreseen in the creature (174–180). He fails to see, however, that Paul’s statements about divine election have direct bearing on the doctrine of reprobation. Hoehner asserts “[in election] there is no indication of any dislike towards those not chosen. It is not a rejection with disdain ... Nowhere is election contrasted with reprobation. It speaks only of those who are chosen and nothing of those not chosen” (175). But does not God’s choice of some entail the passing by of others? Election necessarily entails reprobation.

Ephesians also affirms the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of the sinner. Hoehner understands Paul to teach at Eph 2:3 that our sinful actions derive from the sinful nature that we have inherited from Adam (324). The “calamity of sin” is “not something undeserved.” Sinners are “helplessly entrapped in their own snare.” The love of God in the gospel is “given irrespective of merit and to those who are undeserving” (326–327). “Salvation is totally of grace and nothing of human effort” (339). The good works of the believer are not “a work for God but God doing a work *in* and *through* the believer.” They

are an “evidence” of salvation, and “proceed from” salvation, so that salvation is of “grace from start to finish” (349–350).

Hoehner argues that Paul, in Eph 2:20 (cf. 3:5–6, 4:11), affirms that the offices of apostle and prophet would come to an end at the close of the apostolic age. The revelatory gifts exercised by apostles and prophets have therefore ceased. Wayne Grudem, however, understands Paul at Eph 2:20 to be referring to a single group of New Testament “apostle-prophets.” Since it is this group that constitutes the “foundation” of the church (2:20), Grudem argues, Paul does not therefore preclude the continuation of what is said to be the separate office of New Testament prophet. Grudem further sees the NT prophet as distinct from “NT apostle-prophet” in this important respect: the utterances of NT prophets are fallible. Consequently, Grudem understands revelatory gifts, so defined, to continue in the life of the church.

Hoehner helpfully defends the view that Paul has in mind two groups (“apostles” and New Testament “prophets”) as the “foundation” of the church in Eph 2:20 (402–403). Grudem’s proposal is syntactically possible but unlikely and without parallel in the New Testament. Further, Paul at Eph 4:11 distinguishes “apostles” and “prophets” as groups, indicating that such a distinction is in view at Eph 2:20. Paul is saying, then, that the offices of apostle and prophet, constitute the once-for-all-laid foundation of the church, with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. In other words, the Scriptures of the New Testament, given by Christ through his apostles, constitute the foundation upon which the church is built. Christ builds the church through ministers whom he has appointed to proclaim this completed and infallible Word of God (2:21; 4:7–16)

Ephesians is also strong in its exposition of Paul’s understanding of role relationships in the home (Eph 5:22–33). The equality of every believer before God (Gal 3:28), Hoehner argues, “does not exclude lines of authority,” nor do these lines of authority imply that “those in authority are better ... than those whom they rule” in the way of being “qualitatively superior” (726, 740). “More importantly,” Hoehner continues, the Trinity affords us a preeminent “example of equality and yet subordination” (726).

How ought husband and wife to relate to one another? Believing wives are commanded to submit to their own husbands, not to men generally (732). Paul’s statement in Eph 5:21 (“*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*”) does not warrant husbands’ submission to their wives, any more than it does parents’ submission to their own children (733). Paul, rather, explains his statement in Eph 5:21 by demonstrating throughout Eph 5:22–6:9 that “specific roles of submission are related to certain lines of authority” (732).

Some have argued that when Paul denominates the husband the “head” of his wife (Eph 5:23), he does not mean to

say that he has authority over her. Hoehner rejects this view and gives reasons for concluding that Paul intends to teach that the man “has authority over” his wife (739). First, Paul has already commanded wives to submit to their own husbands. Second, the overall concern in Eph 5:22–6:9 “is ... lines of authority” (740). Third, while Paul does affirm Christ to be “head” over the church as both the church’s “source” (Eph 4:15) and “ruler” (Eph 1:22), Paul expressly relates the latter to the husband’s role in the home (Eph 5:24).

Hoehner stresses that the authority entrusted to the husband is constructive not destructive. The husband is to protect his wife (743–744), and to love his own wife in emulation of Christ’s sacrificial and sanctifying love for his church (746f.). Christian marriage is not to be a theater where two hostile parties vie for domination of one another. “The primary goal of marriage is not to please oneself but to see the purposes of God work in and through each partner individually and corporately” (785).

For the Reformed pastor, *Ephesians* has a multiplicity of strengths. It is not, however, without its shortcomings. Hoehner’s exegetical conclusions do not always conform to the teaching of Scripture. One example merits extended consideration. Paul, at Eph 3:4–6, speaks of the “mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” Hoehner understands the “mystery” of which Paul speaks to be “believing Jews and Gentiles united into one body.” Under the OT, Gentiles “had to become Jews in order to belong to ... the company of God.” Under the NT, “Gentiles do not become Jews nor do Jews become Gentiles. Rather, both believing Jews and Gentiles become one new entity, Christians” (433–434).

For Hoehner, then, the church is *tertium quid*. It is neither a Gentile body *per se*, nor is it to be identified with Israel of old. To “make the church the ‘new Israel,’” Hoehner argues, “is contrary to the whole point of Eph 2:11–22 where the ‘new person’ is distinct from the nation Israel” (447).

How, then, are the promises of the Old Testament to be related to the New Covenant? We must take them “literally,” Hoehner claims. “Only those promises restated in the NT apply to the church and those that are not mentioned apply to the nation Israel and are yet to be fulfilled. There is no indication in the NT that the land promises made to Israel are for the church’s possession” (447–448).

There are, for Hoehner, two distinct peoples (Israel and the church) with two distinct sets of promises belonging to each. The problem with this dispensational reading of these verses is that it runs counter to Paul’s claim concerning believers in Eph 2:19–22. Gentiles, formerly “alienated from the commonwealth

of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise” (2:12), are now “no longer strangers and aliens, but ... fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (2:19). Paul claims, then, that Gentiles have been now granted citizenship (“fellow citizens”), having formerly been excluded from citizenship in “the commonwealth of Israel.” The continuity of the metaphor of citizenship to describe God’s people across redemptive history suggests that God has not created an entity (“the church”) altogether separate from Israel. He has, rather, reconstituted the one commonwealth of God to consist of Jews *and* Gentiles who profess faith in and obedience to the crucified and exalted Messiah of God, Jesus. This reconstituted commonwealth, formerly denominated “Israel,” the New Testament calls the “church.”

Further, Paul elsewhere indicates that he understands God to have had a single people across redemptive history. He describes the people of God in Rom 11 as an olive tree. Certain branches (unbelieving Israelites) are broken off for unbelief. Other, wild branches (Gentiles) are grafted into the tree. Paul’s description of the people of God as “the household of God” (2:19) also calls to mind the way in which Scripture elsewhere speaks of the people of God across redemptive history as a single house (Heb 3:5–6). Moses was a “servant” in this house, but Christ is “over God’s house as a son.” In Eph 2–3, as elsewhere, the Scripture affirms a single people of God across redemptive history.

What, then, is the “newness” of the mystery of Eph 3:4–6? In what sense were the realities of Eph 3:6 cloaked from Old Testament saints, but only revealed through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament? The mystery is not that God has incorporated Gentiles into the people of God alongside Jews. The pervasive prophetic expectation of the Gentiles being brought into the Messiah’s kingdom is evident from the Old Testament. What was not clear to Old Testament believers is that Gentiles would enter into the people of God in such a way as to enjoy full equality of spiritual status and privilege with their fellow Jewish believers. The mystery, Paul says, is that when God reconstituted his people after the appearing of his Son, he neither consigned Gentile believers to second-class standing in the kingdom nor required them first to become Jews committed to observing the Mosaic ceremonial laws.

In summary, *Ephesians* merits the careful study of any Reformed student of the Greek text of *Ephesians*. It should not, however, be the only resource that one consults. *Ephesians* is primarily concerned to address lexical, grammatical, and syntactical questions posed by the text. Its strength is not in addressing and satisfactorily resolving the full range of systematic-theological and historical-theological questions that many Reformed ministers will want to address when they teach *Ephesians*. For this reason, the reader should give Hoehner’s *Ephesians* a prized place on his study shelf ... right

next to the expositions of John Calvin, Matthew Henry, Paul Bayne, James Fergusson, John Stott, Sinclair Ferguson, and others. ■

Review: Sinclair Ferguson. *In Christ Alone: Living the Christ Centered Life* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2007). 243 pages. ISBN 9781567690897. \$18.00. Reviewed by Christopher A. Hutchinson, Senior Pastor of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, Blacksburg, Virginia.

The first thing one must know about *In Christ Alone* is that it is not a monograph. It is a collection of fifty short articles which Sinclair Ferguson, currently Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC, penned over two decades for two publications, *Eternity* magazine and *Tabletalk*. Ferguson has arranged them topically into six different sections, and while the structure helps provide some framework, the fact is that these remain fifty distinct essays. In essence, *In Christ Alone* is a compilation of Ferguson's exegetical theology over a period of twenty years.

However, this is what makes the book so useful, especially for use in personal or family devotions. For Ferguson is the same throughout: always sound, and always, as the title signifies, Christ-centered. As Jerry Bridges puts it on the book cover, *In Christ Alone* serves as a small systematic theology in the form of a very readable book. If one were to commit fifty days to reading this book, one chapter per day, then one will indeed learn better how to live a Gospel-centered life. And that is simply because every chapter is chock full of Scripture, pointing the believer to the greatness and grace of his Savior.

But quoting lots of Scripture does not guarantee Christ-centered thinking. Another well known Christian book boasts almost one thousand Biblical quotes, and even begins with the promising statement, "It's not about you." But Rick Warren's best-selling *The Purpose Driven Life*, with its forty day program, turns out to be all about you and what you can make of your life, with God's help. Of course, this fits perfectly with Warren's Arminian theology, and so we are not too surprised that in the forty chapter summaries, Warren mentions Jesus Christ only three times, and in two of those cases, what you must do for Him. No resting in Christ there. It is not that Warren doesn't have good things for us to ponder and to do, but without that total, robust reliance on Christ alone, he offers little more than a moralism cloaked in evangelical-sounding language.

I only bring this up because of the complete contrast one will find with *In Christ Alone*. I will admit that I allowed my mind to fantasize what might have been had Ferguson and Reformation Trust published this work under the title, "The Christ-Driven Life: fifty days to discover life's true purpose."

Not that Ferguson would advocate explicitly such a simplistic fifty day program as if that could guarantee a closer intimacy with Christ. Indeed, he seems to recognize that such an approach would undermine the very premise of the collection. For instance, Ferguson bemoans the idea of gaining Christian contentment by programmed means, such as "five steps to contentment in a month." Rather, he writes, "Christians must discover contentment the old-fashioned way: we must learn it" (187–188). Likewise, regarding contemporary approaches to mortification of sin, he writes that keen young Christians can be vulnerable to quick fixes, "but that in our evangelical subculture quick fixes do not solve long term problems." Thus, the reason that Christians today turn to Paul to tell them *what* to do, but then run to the local Christian bookstore to discover *how* to do it is that "we do not linger long enough over what Paul is saying" (218, 220). We are impatient and pragmatic and want *our* lives to have purpose *now*.

But Ferguson offers a different program, one that reflects the older, grittier and more patient devotion which used to mark reformed piety before it was annexed and homogenized by the larger neo-evangelical subculture which took form in the middle of the last century. In Ferguson, one finds no self-focused and self-empowered program which offers a quick path to greater godliness. Rather, when one reads these essays, one is caught up in the author's own Christ-centered thought. One gets the sense that it would never occur to Ferguson to suggest such a fleshly approach to growing in grace as a fifty day program, since such a thing almost inevitably takes one's eyes *off* the Savior and onto oneself as the one completing the preset formula.

Indeed, it is the hallmark of these essays that they are instead Christ-focused and thus the collection is aptly named. Perhaps this is best epitomized in the chapter introducing Hebrews, when Ferguson asks whether Hebrews "does anything for us?" He then explains how there is no letter in the New Testament that tells us more about Christ and His work: how it is Hebrews which reveals how Jesus is the key to understanding the Old Testament; how Hebrews displays the greatness of Jesus Christ while emphasizing the importance of His humanity; and how it emphasizes the nature of true faith, a faith which values the Lord Jesus Christ above all things. Ferguson then concludes, "If studying Hebrews had that effect on us, it would be time well spent, don't you think? How do you feel about Hebrews 'doing' that for you?" (45–48).

This is Ferguson at his best, reminding us that the most practical thing we can do is to study and meditate upon the person and merits of our Lord Jesus. We see this also in his explication of the Sabbath when he states that the key is not so much to ask what is OK to do on a Sunday or not, but *internally to cease* "from all self-sufficiency in order to rest in God's grace" (228–229). Likewise, this pure resting in Christ

allows us to enjoy the “greatest of all Protestant heresies”—the grace of assurance, that we might know beyond doubt that our souls are saved eternally simply by looking to Jesus alone (149–152). And if we in the Reformed world seek revival and the power to witness, our first step is not to study and discuss much as we tend to do, but to “wait” on the Spirit’s anointing (95). This is another way of saying that in order to be truly useful we must *first* rest in Christ.

Moreover, this resting in Christ is not just for the new believer but for all Christians their whole life long. If we wish to decrease our worldliness and grow in our affection for Christ, the way to do that is no different then when we first believed:

What was it that created that first love? Do you remember? It was our discovery of Christ’s grace in the realization of our own sin.... Forgiven much we loved much (Luke 7:47)... The way in which we maintain “the expulsive power of a new affection” (for Christ) is the same as the way we first discovered it. Only when grace is still “amazing”—when we return to Christ and the cross where God’s love for us was demonstrated to us (Rom. 5:8)—does it retain its power in us. Only as we retain a sense of our own profound sinfulness can we retain a sense of the graciousness of God (225).

And so a major theme of *In Christ Alone* is indeed taking our eyes off ourselves and our own efforts by thinking less pragmatically and more theologically—of meditating upon the Gospel. And the very fact that this theme emerges from fifty distinct essays rather than an agenda driven monograph serves to make it all the more authentic. This Christ-centeredness emerges from Ferguson in every essay simply because he is Christ-centered as a pastor, a theologian and a Christian. These essays are simply his meditating upon Scripture with *his* need for Christ in view—and that naturally leads him to the Gospel, that we may rest in it.

Not that Ferguson is a quietist by any means. He stays firmly in the mainstream of Reformed thought by insisting that true faith issues forth in good works. Assurance of salvation leads to love and good works, attendance to the public and private means of grace, and faithfulness to Christ until the end (152). In a chapter on personal holiness, Ferguson emphasizes secret piety and challenges us to embrace the word “duty” once again and see it as a delight (159–162).

Indeed, one of the most valuable aspects of *In Christ Alone* is Ferguson’s realistic assessment of the Christian life, that true Christian piety involves suffering and not just triumph. In this, once again, reading Ferguson takes one back into an older and deeper piety that the evangelicalism of our day has forgotten. For instance, in the chapter entitled, “Struggles,” Ferguson describes the apostle Peter’s growth in grace not in terms of triumph, but in Peter learning, bit by bit, what it means

to take up the cross (in his case, literally). Ferguson writes, “Perhaps we are so used to thinking about the infallibility of what the apostles wrote that we fail to take seriously enough the failures in the way they lived” (180). This is a sobering view of sanctification, but one that is ultimately encouraging, for if Peter could so struggle and fail, and yet remain justified and useful to God, so can we.

Likewise, Ferguson goes on in the next chapter to describe how real Christian character is shown not in one’s own recognition, but in the ability to “play the second fiddle well” (183–186). That the mark of a growing Christian is that he encourages others and serves the Church behind the scenes, not caring who gets the credit. In this way, we reflect the spirit of Barnabas, and more importantly, of Christ.

In these things, Ferguson seems to “get” what was once common among our forefathers and yet forgotten in our day: authentic Christian faith involves sacrifice, service and suffering. That enjoying the benefits of Christ requires sharing in His sufferings—not so much that we need to be persecuted outwardly on a daily basis, but that following in the way of Christ *means* dying to self, becoming a servant to those around you, and enduring hardship with the sobriety, hope and joy that only the Gospel can provide. This is clearest in the chapter entitled, “Growing Strong in the War Zone,” in which Ferguson suggests that suffering actually be considered a mark of the Church, along with the Word, sacraments and prayer. He speculates that the only reason it was not listed in the classic formulations is that our forefathers simply took it for granted! And so we should not long for the glory of the “golden days” of Calvin’s Geneva, or Knox’s Scotland, or Edwards’s Northampton, for all these men and the people of these ages knew that true glory belongs not only in the future hope of heaven, but is “part of the ‘here and now’ of suffering” (201–204).

Ferguson even has a “word for the Reformed” in this regard in a chapter on what it means to have true Pentecostal power. After asking why it is that we Reformed lack power in our evangelistic witness, and suggesting that we are too prone to study, discuss and run ahead without “waiting” for the Spirit’s anointing, Ferguson then makes a deeper point. He writes:

Those who received power in the apostolic days had to settle the related issue of the crucifixion. They grasped that the risen Lord was the One who had first become a crucified Savior. Following Him meant a mark across their shoulders, a piercing of their hands and feet, and yes, a gashing of their sides, too. *Waiting* without *emptying* will not lead to *going* with the fullness of the Spirit (95–96).

In other words, we will never have spiritual power to

evangelize (or anything else) unless we first embrace the crucifixion for ourselves—to take up our crosses of sacrifice, suffering and service in the way of Christ. He then concludes:

So, how about the *empowered* Reformed church? How about the *Spirit-filled* Reformed church? Is the Reformed church these things by definition? Only if there is first the *crucified* Reformed church (96).

A quote such as that needs no further elaboration.

I will admit that when I first began *In Christ Alone*, I was somewhat skeptical of its usefulness as a *book*, and even a little cynical. Why republish fifty different articles under one cover? But here is the usefulness: in this collection, we have an example of sound, consistent, Christ-centered thinking penned over a period of two decades, all without any resort to gimmick or fad. We are encouraged by getting a glimpse into the heart of a man captured by Christ alone. As Alistair Begg puts it in his foreword, the reason this simple Gospel focus is so needed today, is that “with the prevailing emphasis on ecology and poverty, many (evangelicals) would be hard pressed to agree with George Smeaton that ‘to convert one sinner from his way, is an event of greater importance, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil’” (2). Sinclair Ferguson needs no such convincing.

So if you want a welcome break from the shallow, pragmatic, self-focused devotional literature of our day, and want to read truly Christ-centered reflections, Ferguson and Reformation Trust have done us a favor to gather all of these articles under one cover. The next time someone suggests a forty day devotional program, consider giving them *In Christ Alone*, and suggest to them that therein lie fifty great chapters about the real purpose of life—knowing, loving and resting in Jesus Christ. ■

Edward T. Welch, *Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest* (New Growth Press, 2008). Paperback. 314 pages. ISBN 978-0978556754. \$15.99. Reviewed by Rev. Daniel F. Patterson.

We live in a fear-driven culture. From analysts announcing the economic doom of our country to movies depicting a long and horrific death at the hands of a merciless madman, we are fed a constant diet of worst-case scenarios of apocalyptic proportions. Combine this with the fear that naturally resides in our hearts and we begin to realize that, even as Christians, to live is to fear.

It is in this cultural and spiritual context that Dr. Edward Welch provides us with a book that surgically exposes what

lies beneath our fear and anxiety and then points us to the One who promises peace and rest.

Running Scared is, most broadly, divided into two sections. The first section looks at our fears and worries, “with an unaided eye” (pg. 13). In typical fashion Welch masterfully describes both what fear looks like and what fear feels like. Fear is described as the “background noise of everyday life” (pg. 21). Worriers are insightfully described as those who are immune to reason; live in the future; see that future in minute, gory detail; but are ultimately false prophets.

In this section Welch also touches briefly on the possibility that such anxiety points to a genetic cause. Rather than dismissing such a possibility, Welch encourages his readers to dig deeper. He says, “But whether there is a genetic contribution or not, don’t let the first hint of a genetic link abort all other promising leads. Don’t let the rationale, ‘Mom worried a lot,’ be the end of your examination of worry. When you listen to worry and witness its stubborn grasp, you find something that is most assuredly *you*. You have your *reasons* for worrying. You have purposes in your anxieties” (emphasis original, pg. 53). This is where Welch and much of the literature from the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation shines. Many battles have been fought in Christian counseling circles over the issue of psychotropic medication (medicine used to treat mental health disorders). Rather than entangling themselves in this battle, however, CCEF literature pastorally calls its readers, regardless of what side of the fence on which they find themselves, to deep self-examination. This is wise not only because of its respect for what seems to be an area of Christian liberty, but also because self-examination is part and parcel of the Christian life.

The second section “adds the glasses of Scripture to the study of fear and anxiety,” because, “without them we might have insights but no firm answers” (pg. 57). The first three chapters of this section review those things which are most foundational to address fear and anxiety. To accomplish this Welch employs what he calls “the manna principle” in which he examines God’s provision of manna for the Israelites. Because this principle is employed as a foundational element throughout the book a word of explanation is in order.

The manna story of Exodus, Welch contends, is the story for all worriers. In it we catch a glimpse of God’s perfect provision for us in our wilderness of worry. When things seem abysmal at any given moment, God is not distant or silent. Things are not always as they seem. Instead, at such a time is when God is especially close, teaching his people to call out to him and trust him in the midst of their fear. Key to the manna story is that God is not only the One who hears, delivers and draws near, but he is also the one

who tests. God tests us not in order to bring us down, but graciously to expose our mixed allegiances so that we might turn back to God and receive his grace. Welch confidently asserts, “God is not playing mind games with us; he is forging a relationship” (pg. 75). The next thirteen chapters deal with fear as it relates to (1) money and possessions; (2) people and their judgments; and (3) death, pain, and punishment. In all of these topics, the “manna principle” is the backdrop, setting before the reader the God who provides for his people. Welch then spends the remaining nine chapters pressing home the peace that God brings and how that peace is appropriated.

Having given a brief outline of the book, several observations will serve to highlight why this book will prove valuable to pastors and layman alike.

First, the book is realistic. Many readers are familiar with the Bob Newhart Mad TV skit in which a woman enters the counselor’s office filled with fear and anxiety. The counselor confidently tells his client that she will not need more than five minutes of therapy and it will cost her no more than five dollars. Pleasantly surprised, the woman begins to tell of her fears and worries. After she is done, the counselor informs her that he has two words for her that will clear up all her problems. As she readies herself for these profound words the counselor blurts out, somewhat impatiently, “STOP IT!” Shocked, the woman asks, “excuse me?” Again, the counselor replies, “STOP IT!” The rest of the skit continues this back and forth, highlighting the counselor’s noticeably unrealistic expectation that this woman will simply stop worrying.

Though certainly a caricature, the skit exposes what is the tendency of a large sector of pastors and counselors in the church today. Fear and worry are expressed, the demands of God’s Word to stop worrying are pressed upon the person, and the counselee is expected simply to stop it. The problem with this approach is that it is unrealistic. Fear runs deep in us all and the mission of mortification is a life-long battle. Welch seems to understand this as he provides, at the end of each chapter, a “personal response” section in which he reveals his own responses to fear and the promises of God’s Word. Though the goal is to stop worrying, Welch maintains that the road there is long and difficult. It is by no means automatic. For example, in response to the story of Abraham’s faith that God could raise Isaac from the dead in Hebrews 11:10, Welch’s says, “These words *sound* good—a son resurrected, a much better home—and they were more than enough for Abraham. But they might not seem like enough for you. They may fall short of comfort, at least for now” (pg. 89). Welch’s answer, of course, is not simply to give up, but rather to focus on how God has already delivered us in numerous ways. In his “personal response” section he

states, “The God of suspense is delivering left and right... But these after the fact deliverances? ... What if you actually went through your worst nightmare—sexual violation, death of a loved one, divorce? What then? Where was the deliverance? What difference does the after-the-fact deliverance make then? It means there will be lots of sorrow as we walk through life, but we aspire to know sorrow that is mingled with hope. For subjects of King Jesus death and tragedy are never the last word. The goodness of our God is certain. He has given up his very Son for our redemption. There is no reason to doubt him” (pg. 92).

The realism of the book is further highlighted as Welch tackles the issues of money, pain and death. Unlike many of the health and wealth preachers of today who promise what they can never deliver, Welch reminds us that we live in a fallen world. Though he maintains that God gives us grace for today, and will grant us grace in the future, “God does not promise grace that removes hardships” (pg. 142). In fact, those who are in the kingdom of Christ will be familiar with hardships. We will not escape the difficulties of this life. However, we can be assured that if we are called to a death that is terrible, or suffering that seems unbearable God will grant us grace when that time comes. “It is enough to know,” Welch declares, “that I will receive grace. I will know the presence of the Spirit and I will die, or be rescued, in a way that pleases the Lord.” Again, this approach is a far cry from the hedonistic philosophy of so many preachers today. Welch is to be commended for steering clear of this theology of false promises and self-serving interests.

These examples briefly highlight the pastor’s heart which lies beneath just about everything Welch has put into print, namely, the realism that is to mark those who struggle with debilitating fear as well as those who counsel them.

Second, the book is revealing. When the person in the pew is struck with fear it is counterintuitive to slow down and listen, “but,” Welch contends, “fear is speaking and we should listen” (pg. 37). Not only is this approach to fear counterintuitive to the person in the pew, but often to pastors and counselors. Listening to fear is often equated with indulging in fear. However, Welch says that we should listen to what fear is telling us because fear and worry reveal us. They reveal the things that we love and value. Though there are times when fear says that something is just plain dangerous and we should be afraid, Welch says, “my goal in listening to my fears is to learn how to decipher what else they are saying. When I pause and listen, I might find that fear says a lot and speaks clearly. What it says can provide me with immensely helpful direction” (pg. 47).

Again, Welch’s insight here is immensely helpful to pastors and parishioners alike. Our natural tendency is to ignore fear because (1) fear is simply no fun and (2) our fears are often

the result of a lack of trust in the Lord and thinking about them can seem like wallowing in them. Yet slowing down and listening to what fear tells us reveals our allegiances. Fear and worry are not mere emotions, then; they are expressions of what we hold dear. If we are constantly worried about money and possessions this reveals a heart that is storing up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

Furthermore, Welch contends, another way to reveal our allegiances is to follow our fear back to what others think about us. Because fear often deceives us into thinking we *need* something that actually we only *want*, our perceived need of people's approval controls us. Though there is nothing wrong with wanting to be loved, when we want these things too much, we want them for our own glory rather than God's (pg. 178). Welch's simple, yet profound answer to our fear of another's judgments is that the Lord calls us to love others more than we need them (pgs. 181–190).

Again, Welch's insight here is keen. Contrary to the psychological gurus of our day who tell us to avoid difficult people and love ourselves more, Welch calls us to be outwardly focused, rebalancing the scales of love so that when others reject us, such rejection doesn't control us. This rebalancing of love has a further benefit for evangelism. When it comes to speaking to others about the gospel of Jesus Christ, if my first concern is loving them rather than being liked by them, such love will outweigh my self-serving desire to be liked.

Thirdly and finally, the book is redemptive. In saying that *Running Scared* is a redemptive book, we mean that Welch is constant in reminding the reader that the antidote to fear and anxiety is the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is seen no more clearly than in the section entitled, "God Speaks on Death, Pain, and Punishment." For many Christians it is not death or dying that scares them as much as what comes after death. Fear of eternal condemnation haunts a large portion of the Christian church. Much of this fear comes from a lack of faithful, Christ-centered preaching. However, much of the fear comes from our own hearts, which tend to focus more on the Christian than on the Christ. This is what Welch refers to as "the scrupulous conscience" (pg. 219). Though those with seared consciences rarely think about eternal matters and final judgment, those with scrupulous consciences *always* do. Their minds dance with scenarios in the great courtroom before the judgment seat of Christ. However, Welch contends that at this point, the scrupulous conscience finds itself not in the real courtroom, but in the Devil's counterfeit courtroom. In the real courtroom we know that our deeds are not enough; we know that our hope is in Christ alone for deliverance; we know that when we are convicted of sins we are pointed past our sins and

on to Christ. The last word in the real courtroom is always hope. However, in the false courtroom, the attention is all on our sins; we stand and fall on our own behavior; we are alone without an advocate; and questions are raised about the extent of God's forgiveness (pg. 221).

It is at this point, Welch contends, that we must cry out, "Christ alone, Christ alone.... When you are feeling weak, ask for the Spirit to teach you more about how righteousness is not inherent in you but has been given to you by the righteous acts of Jesus (Rom. 5:15–21)." Still, he says, a scrupulous conscience will always question whether it has enough faith. "Faith," he responds, "says, *I need Jesus*. It is not a work, it is an act of desperation, and you are certainly familiar with that" (pg. 221). As if this is not enough, Welch continues, the scrupulous conscience is called to rest in the judgments made by its pastors and elders who have judged our faith to be credible and have been given the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

This redemptive aspect of pastoral counseling has been neglected for far too long in Presbyterian and Reformed circles. Much of Christian counseling in the past three decades has focused on correcting sinful behavior at the expense of calling counselees to rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Such Christian behaviorism has done more to foster fear than to fight it. What fearful Christians need is for their pastors and counselors to drive home the wonderful and precious promises of God that are made to them in the Lord Jesus Christ, calling them to faithfulness in light of that foundational truth. Again, Welch accomplishes this in his last set of chapters under the title, "Peace Be With You." On the cover page of this section Welch pens these words: "If we still feel slow to really grasp what God says to fearful and anxious people, we can take heart. As he has already shown us in the Sermon on the Mount, when he exhorted us not to worry, God is patient and willing to walk slowly with us, all the while speaking even more persuasive words to our fearful hearts" (pg. 245). Our God is longsuffering with fearful sinners like us. Therefore, those who are called to minister in Christ's name to those filled with fear and anxiety must exhibit much compassion and longsuffering.

With these things said, there is just one thing with which to quibble. Conspicuously absent is any emphasis on the public use of the means of grace (the Word, sacraments, and prayer). We live in a day and age in which the proclamation of God's Word in the context of public worship on the Lord's Day is held in low esteem. The *Larger Catechism*, however, reminds us that, "the Spirit of God maketh the reading, *but especially the preaching* of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of

conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation” (emphasis mine, Q&A 155).

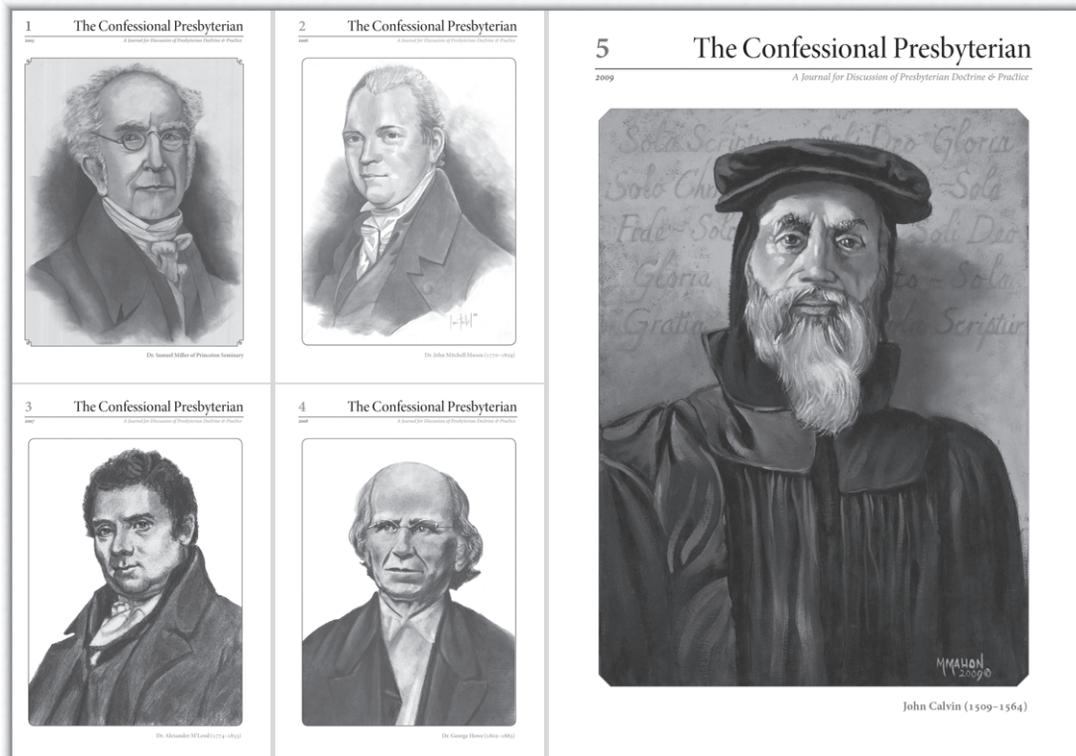
Furthermore, in the *Confession’s* chapter on the Lord’s Supper the divines state that the Lord’s Supper is, “to be observed in [Christ’s] church, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death; the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe to him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body” (emphasis mine WCF, XXIX.I).

The point in citing these references is to highlight that any mortification of fear and anxiety in the life of the believer must necessarily include a vigorous and ordinary use of the public

means of grace. If in the preaching of God’s Word He speaks, and by His Spirit acts upon the hearts of believers, convicting them of sin and encouraging them in the gospel promise; and if in the sacraments He preaches that gospel visibly to us, the antidote to fear does not include simply reading God’s Word and meditating on it. It must include hearing God’s voice in preaching, and by faith knowing the love of God, which casts out fear displayed in the sacraments.

There is little doubt that Dr. Welch would agree with the sentiments above, yet in a culture that is growing increasingly hostile to a high view of the Word and sacraments, this is exactly where we need to be the clearest.

Though the above criticism is substantial this reviewer hopes that it will not detract from the gap this book fills in the field of Christian counseling. The redemptive, revealing, and realistic nature of *Running Scared* demands that those who live in fear, as well as those who walk alongside of them in counseling, make this book part of their library. ■



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