

Book Reviews

- Bioengagement: Making a Christian Difference through Bioethics Today*, p. 72
- Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, p. 72
- Christians and Politics Beyond the Culture*, p. 73
- Communicating for Life: Christian Stewardship in Community and Media*, p. 74
- The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*, p. 75
- Dictionary of Historical Theology*, p. 75
- Eschatology*, p. 76
- Forerunner of the Great Awakening: Sermons by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691-1747)*, p. 76
- A Free Church, a Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology*, p. 77
- Health Care and the Rise of Christianity*, p. 78
- Introducing the Reformed Faith: Biblical Revelation, Christian Tradition, Contemporary Significance*, p. 78
- Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*, p. 79
- John Calvin, Student of the Church Fathers*, p. 80
- The Local Churches in a Global Era: Reflections for a New Century*, p. 80
- More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History*, p. 81
- The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*, p. 81
- The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment*, p. 82
- Systematic Theology, Volume 3*, p. 83
- Where Needs Meet Rights: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in a New Perspective*, p. 83

Bioengagement: Making a Christian Difference through Bioethics Today, edited by Nigel M. DE S. Cameron, Scott E. Daniels, and Barbara J. White, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000.

This book is a call to arms to the evangelical Christian to become engaged in the decision-making world of bioethics. It is a call to every person who has made a personal commitment to Jesus, the Christ, as Lord and Savior.

It is an anthology, divided in six sections beginning with the Christian vision and continuing with the education of the health care provider (according to evangelical theology), the media, its usefulness and its pitfalls, law and public policy, health care, and the church. There is an especially interesting chapter that gives an account of the gradual involvement of the federal government into health care. Mention is made of the unethical treatment of African-Americans in Tuskegee, Alabama, in efforts to learn more about the treatment of syphilis, and experimentation with mental patients. The writers are eminent scholars and experts in their fields of study. The book is a publication of The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, Bannockburn, Illinois. It is one of several publications from this society dedicated to providing resources to its members and to others interested in the field of bioethics.

"What does it mean to be a Christian?" in today's society and culture is a question that guides all the contributors to this book. "Secularized Christianity" is attacked. This is described as the subtle and gradual movement over the last hundred or so years of major churches to meld into the standards and values of a world where God is ignored or denied and the call of Jesus Christ to "Repent and believe the gospel" (Mk. 1:15b) is irrelevant. Christians should be those who "have their sins forgiven by God, and as a result, have entered into a personal relationship with the historic, incarnate, and living Jesus Christ" (p. 3). Individual Christians, buttressed by their memberships in churches are "salt" and "light" in this secularized world, influencing decisions in accordance with revealed truth, guiding the way to the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ. The Christian is the one who bears witness to the gospel in this secularized

world of HMO health-care, research, choosing your sex partner(s), and abortion clinics.

While it is the individual Christian who bears the Cross, the secular principle of autonomy is roundly criticized again and again in these essays. Autonomy is a principle that says the individual has a "right" to determine what kinds of treatment he will receive or choose not to receive. It is the driving force behind all "living wills" and advanced directives (when the patient is unable to speak for himself). Although the Christian has made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, he has also been "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20) and he/she is incorporated into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12ff.).

According to this anthology, autonomy is a principle that needs to be excised from health care because it ignores that we are in community, we are a part of God's creation.

This book calls upon all Christians to become engaged in the world of health care, especially in their own communities, wherever health care decisions are made, and come to those arenas committed to the Christian message.

George P. Timberlake

Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary, by I. John Hesselink, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997. x, 244pp.

This is a welcome book. It combines Ford Lewis Battles's fine translation of Calvin's 1538 Latin edition of his first catechism and John Hesselink's excellent commentary on it. For those who would like a simple introduction to the main themes of Calvin's theology, this book is an ideal one to put into their hands.

Shortly after arriving in Geneva in 1536, Calvin proceeded to put three things into place: first, a confession of faith; secondly, "Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva," and thirdly, a catechism intended primarily for the instruction of youth. These were, as Hesselink points out in his introduction, indispensable to Calvin's view of a well-ordered church.

Calvin wrote the 1537 Catechism in French. Paul T. Fuhrmann translated it into English in 1949 under the title, *Instruction in the Faith*. Calvin's Latin edition appeared in 1538. Strangely, it disappeared and was not

rediscovered until 1877. Ford Lewis Battles produced an English translation of it about 1974 and had it published privately. The translation is now available to a larger public in this volume.

The *First Catechism* is historically and theologically significant for two reasons. First, as John T. McNeill pointed out, it was "a brilliant summation" of the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Secondly, it also occupied a crucial position between the first and second editions (1536 and 1539) of the *Institutes*. Ford Battles has argued that Calvin really came into his own as an independent theologian in his second edition. Therefore, the *First Catechism* is significant to Calvin scholars because it provides "an invaluable clue to the development of the young Calvin's thought" (p. 42).

Hesselink's commentary follows the catechism section by section and provides an instructive exposition of the main themes of the catechism including true religion and the knowledge of God, anthropology, sin, the law of God, election and predestination, faith, the Apostles' Creed, prayer, the sacraments, the church and civil government. The commentary is informed by references to Calvin's discussion of these topics in his *Institutes*, commentaries, sermons, treatises, and letters, as well as by secondary sources of which Hesselink has an admirable command. Indeed, there are forty-five pages of notes. There is an excursus on the authority of Scripture, another on Christian freedom, and an appendix on "Calvin, Theologian of the Holy Spirit," which incorporates some of Hesselink's earlier work on this subject.

Yet, this appreciative reader does have some criticism. In discussing Calvin's view of election, Hesselink refers to Karl Barth's critique but appears to side with Calvin by asserting that Barth's ". . . unique restatement of the doctrine of reprobation has an even more slender exegetical base than the traditional view" (p. 96). Does it? Hesselink does not substantiate his point. Moreover, did Barth actually teach that "rejection is no longer possible for humanity"? Passages, such as, ". . . it is the event of what thou for thy part shall say and do (or not say, and not do) which decides whether the ancient curse will again be laid on thee with what was said, . . ." (Karl Barth, *CD II/2*, 324) would indicate that the issue is not as definite as Hesselink would have

us believe in charging Barth with "an incipient universalism" (p. 96, 98). There are problematic sentences, such as, "Calvin . . . warns against what is popularly regarded as a Puritan or pietistic rejection of the world . . ." (62) when what Calvin had in mind were certain Spiritualists. How many Puritans or for that matter Pietists were guilty of the charge of rejecting the world, its wisdom, and accomplishments?

Yet, apart from these quibbles, Hesselink's *Calvin's First Catechism* is an excellent introduction to Calvin's theology which can be recommended to lay people and budding theologians.

William Klempa

Christians and Politics Beyond the Culture, edited by David P. Gushee, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. 255pp., \$21.99.

These papers were presented at a 1998 conference on Christian faith and public policy hosted by Union University. The diversity of essays provides a fine foundation for reflecting on and discerning an approach (or approaches) to Christian activity in politics and social justice. There is no attempt to ignore either the need for a faith-driven message for a broken world or the division-ridden, often incoherent response of the evangelical community.

The editor, David P. Gushee, in his essay, "From Despair to Mission," presents the biblical argument for involvement which is echoed by essays that follow. He asserts that Jesus' "world-wide strategy was focused primarily on evangelism and disciple-making."

Two essays illustrating a Reformed and a Roman Catholic approach to political involvement are alone worth the cost of this book. James Skillen uses a reformed theology of God's sovereignty, a doctrine of creation, and a biblical perspective on community to point to the truth that all persons and organizations in every culture are under God—the result being that they are alive or dead depending on their connection to Jesus. This hard truth is nuanced by God's common grace which affords all persons respect and equality. John L. Carr's Roman Catholic perspective is, in my opinion, the best presentation in this collection of essays. In seeking a cooperative spirit, Carr never veers from his insistence that

the kingdom of God has everything to say to culture and politics.

Michael Cromartie in his paper, "The Evangelical Kaleidoscope," summarizes historical arguments centering on whether evangelicals should even be involved in such matters, as well as the history of division and disagreement among those who were involved.

Harry L. Poe's narrative essay, "Politics After the Culture Wars" is a fine example of how earlier approaches to involvement might work themselves out in an actual setting. Paul Freston, in an essay on third world political engagement offers a stern historical warning for the "obvious" solution of Christians taking over politics.

The second section of this book, which addresses several current moral and political issues such as education, divorce, welfare reform, refugees, abortion, and making peace in a well-armed world, enables the reader to see the complexity as well as the potential for addressing issues with a variety of approaches on a number of levels. As the editor and contributors point out, the response of the Christian community to political and social justice issues in our culture has often been feeble, contradictory to a spirit of grace, and, as a result, often dismissed as naïve and uninformed by the culture. It is also noted that strong political action taken by the "conservative right" and other forces for political change connected with the church have most often been campaigns to preserve a religious culture and lifestyle rather than campaigns concerned with social justice for others. It would seem that our fear of relying on grace in its deepest and most far-reaching implications in areas of politics and social justice mutes the testimony and action of a community whose sole identity is defined by that grace.

Peter Van Elderen

Communicating for Life: Christian Stewardship in Community and Media, by Quentin J. Schultze, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001. 191pp., \$14.99.

This stimulating and challenging book by a member of Calvin College's faculty makes connections between communication and being Christian. Chapters 1 and 2 suggest that

human beings are stewards of communication, called as recipients of God's grace to spread God's love. Chapter 3 analyzes the transmission and cultural views of communication. That human communication is fundamentally flawed and clouded by human sin the author examines in chapters 4 and 5. In spite of our failures, the Lord enables us to serve others through the power of communication.

The most interesting chapters for me are 8 and 9 in which Schultze discusses the role of mass media in contemporary society. He suggests that the media "... sometimes (like prophets) challenge secular mainstream culture, but more often (like priests) affirm it." Believing that God requires us all to be virtuous communicators who live authentic lives, the author addresses the importance of ethical communication in chapters 10 and 11. The last chapter invites communicators to follow Jesus, who calls us to serve others and God.

Preachers will benefit from reading this book because it is full of illustrations. The preacher is reminded that all communicators are broken communicators, and Schultze recalls Augustine's three steps for reducing ambiguity: (1) know the author; (2) know the text; and (3) know the context. Pastors will benefit because the author offers four ways of using our symbolic power to serve others: (1) praying for others; (2) sharing our authority with them; (3) nurturing their giftedness; and (4) helping keep alive the voices of those who have gone before us.

The author documents film producer David Puttman's ("Chariots of Fire") attempt to change Hollywood and examines Brian Warner's (Marilyn Manson) popularity as a rock star. Schultze notes, "The commercial media encourage us to form superficial communities of consumption." He warns that "Christian broadcasting sometimes champions a kind of sentimentalism where faith is little more than being a fan of a mass-mediated personality who pretends to be our neighbor."

I recommend *Communicating for Life* to all persons struggling for authenticity in word and deed.

Robert J. Hoeksema

The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends, by S. Mark Heim, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001. xi, 312pp.

The Depth of the Riches is the last in a trilogy of books dealing with religious pluralism and diversity. The first book is *Is Christ the Only Way? Christian Faith in a Pluralistic World*, and the second book is *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion*. Heim sees this third book as a meditation on the Trinity, but I see it as another attempt to answer the question concerning the final state of those who do not accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Heim does believe in the existence of "hell," i.e., annihilation, and holds that this is reserved for those who negate creation itself and the created self. He also believes that the Christian end is salvation, i.e., a relationship of communion through Christ with God and with other creatures and with creation itself that delivers us from sin, evil, and death. But he cannot accept the thought that a God of goodness and grace would send those of other faiths to "hell." Heim, in fact, holds that those of other faiths can obtain heaven, if by heaven we mean their true desire, the highest level they aspire to. If, by heaven, we mean the concrete salvation of communion with the triune God, Heim holds that those of other faiths do not go to heaven either.

Then where do members of these religions go? Heim, building on the trilogy of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, believes that those of other faiths find fulfillment in a middle realm, but one that must be more pluralistic than Dante's purgatory. Instead of one mountain, Heim's vision of the middle realm contains many mountains, one for every diverse religious fulfillment.

Heim, to support his view and vision, strives to show that there is a multiplicity of religious ends, diverse religious fulfillments. He also attempts to show, by developing a trinitarian theology of religious ends, that the Trinity supports the recognition of multiple religious aims. He states, "If Trinity is real, then many of these specific religious claims and ends must be real also" (p. 167). He develops his "Christian" theology of religious ends by building on the works of Raimundo Panikkar, Ninian Smart, Steven Konstantine, Francis X. Clooney, Kenneth Craig, and Arthur

Lovejoy, and declares that every religious end has the triune God as its true context, and exists within God's providence and power. Heim states, "The 'one way' to salvation, and the 'many ways' to religious ends are alike rooted in the Trinity" (p. 209). He continues and states that each religion's end involves relation to a particular aspect of the triune God. Heim believes that because God is responsible for and implicated in all of these religious ends and these religious ends all involve a relation to the Trinity, no relation to God goes without its good gift, that any and all relations to the triune God receives its own fulfillment. As stated earlier, that fulfillment is found in the middle realm between the Christian heaven and the realm of hell.

There is much in this book that I disagree with, but I did find it intellectually stimulating. It does encourage me to continue to strive to understand the depths of other faiths and to continue to dialogue with those of other faiths, but it also strengthens my own convictions concerning eternal life and damnation, concerning heaven and hell and no realm in between.

Carl E. Gearhart

Dictionary of Historical Theology, edited by Trevor A. Hart, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. xx, 599pp., \$50.00.

The editor's preface to the *Dictionary of Historical Theology* (hereafter *DHT*) states that this work fills a gap in theological reference works by concentrating specifically on *historical* theology. While other reference works may cover theological doctrines or provide short summaries of important figures from church history, the *DHT* focuses on the significant texts and schools of thought in the development of Christian theology. The *DHT* contains only 314 entries, thus allowing for more extended treatment of topics. Each article is signed and has bibliography appended for further reading. The authors include many well-known evangelical scholars, most of them from Great Britain or Europe.

The articles are consistently well written, clear, and informative. They provide excellent summaries of the subjects they describe (see in particular Richard Muller's nineteen-page article on "Reformed Confessions and

Catechisms"). The *DHT* is best in its coverage of theological developments in the Reformed, Lutheran, and Anglican traditions. Those looking for significant treatment of topics from Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy must turn elsewhere.

The *DHT* will not replace any existing related reference works, such as the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (which provides much more extensive, although more brief, coverage of historical topics) or the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (which is better on specific theological doctrines). It does indeed provide a fine complement to these works and will be an excellent addition to any seminarian or pastor's personal library.

Paul M. Smith

Eschatology, by Hans Schwartz, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. xv, 431pp.

Schwartz points out, "We have made ourselves so much at home here that the last things are no longer appealing" (p. 5). At first Israel's emphasis was also on this life. However, here and there in the Old Testament, there are hints of resurrection. The last judgment and the day of the Lord are also themes to be found there. Schwartz examines the history of the idea of the Messiah and the influence of Zoroastrianism.

Turning to the New Testament, Schwartz first considers the Jewish background and then the role of Jesus. The Gospel writers see in Jesus the final self-disclosure of God so that we now live in an interim period. Schwartz examines the eschatological views of John and Paul and the millennial ideas of the early church.

In the second part of his work, Schwartz provides us with a historical survey of modern eschatology. He traces the developments from Ritschl to Buri. He then looks at the noneschatological Jesus of the Jesus Seminar. This is followed by an examination of Bultmann and his followers. Schwartz then looks at Dodd and the similar views of J.A.T. Robinson. He commends Cullman and Kummel as being most scriptural. He calls Anthony Hoekema's dealing with the problem of the delay of the Parousia exemplary. Next comes an examination of the views of systematic theologians such as Pannenberg and

Moltmann. This is followed by the views of liberation, process, and feminist theologians.

Schwartz next evaluates secular forms of hope, considering scientific materialism and the perspective of evolution. He also considers the possibility of an ecological holocaust. This is followed by a look at secular existentialism, secular humanism, and the New Age movement.

The third part of the book seeks to answer the question, What can we hope for? Here Schwartz discusses death, immortality, and resurrection. Here the resurrection of Christ is decisive. Schwartz discusses the question of what happens between death and resurrection.

Next is a consideration of the subjects of date setting, the millennium, and universalism. Schwartz hopes and prays that everyone will be saved, but says we cannot take it for granted. He looks at purgatory and sees the church as an imperfect picture of heaven. He also examines the final judgment and hell. What we have here is a thorough study of eschatology that appreciates yet questions many of the orthodox views.

[The late] Harry Buis

Forerunner of the Great Awakening: Sermons by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691-1747), Joel R. Beeke, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans. 339pp, \$28.00 (paper).

Thanks to Dr. Beeke, we have for the first time a biographical sketch of Frelinghuysen's life, together with twenty-two of his sermons. This makes it convenient to assess him from the basic facts of his life, as well as from his style of presenting the gospel in his sermons.

The growing body of information on Frelinghuysen's role in the first Great Awakening upgrades his importance in that movement considerably. As Beeke points out: "Whitefield not only acknowledged Frelinghuysen as God's instrument for the commencement of the revivals of the 1740s, but also was influenced by Frelinghuysen's method of preaching with which he became acquainted through Gilbert Tennent" (xxix).

Frelinghuysen is also significant, Beeke indicates, in that he brought with him the full flavor of the Nadere Reformatie, or "Dutch Second Reformation" period, a movement spanning the period between 1600-1800. His

preaching, true to that period, was direct in its call for repentance and conversion. But it was new and shocking to his congregation, resulting in protests and appeals that for a time polarized the Reformed churches of the colony. The toll on Frelinghuysen was also heavy, resulting in a nervous breakdown. Yet in due time, with adjustments on both sides, renewal indeed occurred, building his congregation substantially, Beeke tells us, during his pastorate. One may note from the sermon collections in Beeke's book, a certain progression from a more aggressive style of presenting, towards a more positive, teaching, and affirming style. That his troubles were not entirely born of an unpleasant disposition may be seen from the fact that all five of his sons became pastors, and that both of his daughters married pastors, clear evidence that they found his ministry attractive enough to wish to carry it on.

If Frelinghuysen drew upon a renewal tradition out of the Dutch Reformed history with such potential for fruitfulness, and if he succeeded in transplanting it successfully to the colonies, is his ministry and method worthy of significant attention by Reformed Church seminarians and pastors? Curiously, such a conclusion has not escaped the attention of contemporary Dutch Reformed pastors in the Netherlands. There is a significant renaissance of interest in the Dutch Second Reformation period, seen in the large number of seminars and lectures featuring aspects of this period happening all over the Netherlands, the number of books currently being published, as well as at least one journal with nearly twenty-five years of history, entirely devoted to facets of this period.

Of course the main obstacle to a wider dissemination of these books, seminars, and materials is that they are almost exclusively in Dutch. Thanks to a growing number of scholars such as Dr. Beeke, there is a small but growing body of translated books and articles featuring this period becoming available. This book is certainly a significant contribution in that direction.

Carl Schroeder

A Free Church, a Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology, by John Bolt, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001. xxv, 502pp.

This is an excellent study of Kuyper's position regarding the activity of Christianity in "the public square." But it is more than that. By looking at a wide context it provides a view of the history of ideas of this subject.

Bolt says Kuyper had a rhetorical style that sought to be persuasive. He compares Kuyper to other visitors to America: Alexis de Tocqueville and Lord John Acton. He also looks at what Kuyper had in common with Jonathan Edwards, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Leo XIII.

Kuyper was a fierce opponent of the French Revolution, but believed that Calvin laid the ground for a legitimate revolt against tyranny. Bolt looks at liberation theology and the view of libertarians. Kuyper opposed theocracy by coercion but stood for the right of all segments of society to found their own institutions, such as Christian schools.

Regarding Roman Catholicism, Kuyper emphasizes the necessity of remaining clearly opposed to their doctrines while recognizing that we are allies in the fight against atheism and pantheism. Interestingly, Charles Colson looks to Kuyper to bolster his position of cooperating with Roman Catholics. Bolt then discusses the concept of "the culture war," and calls for civility and tolerance. On this subject, Kuyper held to Augustine's antithesis and yet could see the positive in traditions he opposes.

For many on the Religious Right there is a feeling that with the failure of the impeachment trial of President Clinton, the Right had now lost. A book written by columnist Cal Thomas and the pastor of a large evangelical church in Grand Rapids, Ed Dobson, articulates this surrender and claims that the strategy of fighting for a place in "the public square" was a mistake. While Bolt sees much good in this volume, he believes that the main thesis is mistaken and doing the Christian cause much harm. He agrees with the views and strategy of Kuyper, who calls for a combination of alternative solutions and opportunities that freedom gives us to take our stand in the public square.

Bolt examines the debate of how far Kuyper moved from original Calvinism. In doing so he examines the similarities and

differences between the 1834 Secession and Kuyper's Doleantie. In conclusion, he provides an appendix listing the stops Kuyper made on his American tour, the highlight of which was the Stone Lectures at Princeton, but which also included an address to 2,000 Dutch-Americans in Grand Rapids, one at Third Reformed, Holland, one at Hope College, New Brunswick Seminary, and a visit with President McKinley, as well as many other stops.

[The late] Harry Buis

Health Care and the Rise of Christianity, by Hector Avalos, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. ix, 166pp.

A health care system includes the causes and diagnoses of illness, therapeutic options available to patients, the social or geographic accessibility of those options, and the prevailing attitudes toward patients and healers. Using the methods of medical anthropology, the author compares ancient Israelite, major Greco-Roman, and early Christian systems. Briefly, his thesis is that the role of health care in the rise of Christianity was far more important than has previously been recognized. In examining New Testament references he notes that while healing narratives emphasize theological concerns such as the kingdom of God, they also advance the superior benefits of Christian health care as compared with other systems then available.

The author's focus is on the first three centuries. In early Christianity many came to Jesus primarily because of their illness. At that early stage, Christianity simplified health care in contrast to both the Jewish and Greco-Roman systems. The Christian approach eliminated fees. It redefined the status of patients so that they were not excluded from the community as they were in the Levitical system. The emphasis on faith alone in the healing process eliminated the need to travel to distant temples. However, by the end of the third century, that simplicity had begun to disappear.

Some controversial interpretations are presented. The author sees little distinction between magic and miracle in his comparison of Christian and other systems. He views prayer as one of the "self-help" options open to

patients. He also has a tendency to see biblical rituals like Miriam's removal from the camp in Numbers 12 as merely therapeutic.

Avalos's conclusion is that one of the major aims of early Christianity was the use of health care as a strategy for gaining converts. Even so, he points out that Christianity could not eradicate illness or deal with it any more effectively than other ancient systems.

Glenn Wyper

Introducing the Reformed Faith: Biblical Revelation, Christian Tradition, Contemporary Significance, by Donald K. McKim, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001. xvi, 261pp., \$25.95.

This is a book we have needed for a long time. Earlier treatments of the Reformed tradition such as those by Eugene Osterhaven and John Leith focused on a few major motifs. Conservative Calvinists have written popular studies based on the Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP). Presbyterians have written semi-popular treatments of the Westminster Confession, and more recently Cornelius Plantinga (*A Place to Stand*), John Bolt (*Christian and Reformed*), and I (*On Being Reformed*) have dealt with distinctive Reformed doctrines in a brief, popular manner.

Donald McKim, prominent and prolific Presbyterian theologian, served as a pastor and a theology professor and is currently an editor for Westminster John Knox. This book surpasses all of the above studies in comprehensiveness and contemporaneity. McKim discusses fifteen major doctrines, and in each case gives the biblical basis followed by a brief historical overview, the distinctive Reformed emphasis, and finally the relevance of the doctrine for today. Each chapter concludes with a few questions for discussion. All of this is done in about ten pages per doctrine.

In addition, there is a helpful discussion of the importance of confessions at the beginning of the book. At the end he lists various proposals for distinctive emphases of the Reformed faith, discusses some common questions like, "Do we have free will?" and "Is there salvation outside the church?" and provides his own catechism with fifty-two brief questions and answers.

The theological perspective is moderate and quite traditional, but the exposition is always fresh and clear. McKim knows the classical sources, Augustine, the Reformers, and the Reformed confessions, both ancient and modern, as well as a wide range of contemporary and Reformed theologians. Calvin is cited most frequently, followed by Karl Barth, Daniel Migliore, Jürgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg (a Lutheran theologian). What is particularly gratifying to me is McKim's familiarity with the Dutch Reformed tradition. He frequently cites the Belgic Confession and theologians like Herman Bavinck, Abraham Kuyper, both Louis and Hendrikus Berkhof, and, above all, G. C. Berkouwer. One cannot, however, get an accurate estimate of all the authors quoted or referred to in the extensive and very useful endnotes by checking the index. For example, Jonathan Edwards, Anthony Hoekema, Lewis Smedes, Paul Helm, and Randall Zachman are all cited but are not listed in the index.

Occasionally one may question certain statements such as "*Conversion' is the Spirit's work of regeneration made real in one's life that on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, we turn away from sin and begin a new life of obedience as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit*" (116, emphasis mine). Here, it seems to me, conversion is defined in terms of regeneration in a confusing way. Others will not be satisfied with the definition of the church that he takes from Douglas Ottati, viz., "the association of those who acknowledge God's transformative way with the world in Jesus Christ, and whose purpose it is to increase love of God and neighbor" (160).

Not as important but bothersome to me is the policy of avoiding masculine pronouns in reference to God. Not only does this fly in the face of biblical usage, even the NRSV, but it also makes for awkward abstractions. For example, there are statements like this: "Prayer is the means to the end, or the accomplished purpose of God. Thus God is concerned not only with accomplishing *the purpose . . .*" (54, emphasis mine). In the context we know whose 'purpose' it is, but such a usage strips purpose of its personal character and makes it sound like an abstraction. But this is a minor problem and for some no problem at all. In any case, it should not detract from the value and usefulness of this splendid study. It is an invaluable resource not only for college and

seminary courses, but also for adult church study groups. Widespread use of this book will do much to strengthen the understanding and witness of Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

I. John Hesselink

Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence, by Robert E. Van Voorst, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. xiv, 248pp., \$22.00.

Western Seminary's professor of New Testament has written an evenhanded and perceptive survey of the ancient writings that directly and indirectly allude to the Lord Jesus. He discusses a wide range of references that appear in classical pagan, ancient Jewish, and early non-canonical Christian texts. Some of these documents have been known for some time. Others, like those among the discoveries from Nag Hammadi, have only become available for detailed examination since just before the middle of the twentieth century.

For each literary mention of Christ outside the New Testament, Van Voorst assesses both the authenticity of the text in which it occurs and the value of what it says as evidence for the existence of the Jesus of history. Some references, like the brief notations of the historian Thallus, are of minimal value for such attestation. Others, like those in Josephus, provide accurate and careful witness to Jesus' being a historical person.

The ancient rabbinical tradition and that of the medieval Jewish *Sefer Toledot Yeshu*, the "Book of the Life of Jesus," are, of course, anti-Christian and so are negative toward Jesus. Their more detailed notations provide a strong argument for his being historical.

The witness borne by the Agrapha (non-canonical sayings) and the New Testament Apocrypha by and large does not contribute materially beyond what is known from the canonical Gospels. The major exception to that relatively limited attestation is that of the *Gospel of Thomas*. In that document is found an independent and valuable corroboration that Jesus did, in fact, live and teach.

Much is to be found in this book for the scholar's use. For the working pastor and the interested lay person, the worth of Van Voorst's study is the help it offers for

discussions with those who have doubts that Jesus ever existed. An additional benefit for those who do not have ready access to any of the ancient texts considered by the author is the numerous translations of the texts themselves, including the entire *Gospel of Thomas*.

Glenn Wyper

John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers, by Anthony N.S. Lane, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. xiii, 304pp., \$29.99.

One of the major interests in current Calvin studies is the matter of which textual sources Calvin used. To what extent was he familiar with the writings of early church fathers and medieval scholars such as Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Lombard and Aquinas? Pioneering works in this field were done by L. Smits, a Roman Catholic scholar in his magisterial two-volume study of Calvin's use of Augustine and R. J. Mooi, a Dutch scholar who summarized Calvin's citations of a broad range of church fathers and medievals.

Tony Lane's book not only builds on these two studies and those of more recent researches, but is also more ambitious and more comprehensive. Lane, who is director of research at the London Bible College, has been doing research in this field for more than twenty-five years and is recognized as one of the leading scholars in this area. Some of the specific subjects treated are the extent to which Calvin knew the Greek fathers, the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux, and the major sources Calvin used in his debate with Pighius concerning the bondage and liberation of the will, as well as in his Genesis commentary.

This study is a model of critical historical/theological research. As over against many Calvin scholars who have made exaggerated claims for the influence of various church fathers, Lane is very cautious and operates with a "hermeneutic of suspicion." That is, unless he can find fairly solid evidence to support a claim as to which sources Calvin used and how much he was influenced by them, Lane refuses to make any dogmatic conclusions. For example, he challenges the contention of Thomas Torrance that Calvin was more influenced by the Greek fathers than by Augustine, whom Calvin cites 2,000 times.

Many of Lane's findings will be of interest only to Calvin scholars. For example, Lane is interested not only in whom Calvin cited but in what particular sources he may have used. It turns out that in some cases Calvin was not working with original sources—often because they were unavailable to him—but with collections of writings and sermons that were circulating at that time. Calvin also did not always quote precisely, but the main reason is that he was often quoting from memory. In those days scholars did not document their sources carefully. Nonetheless, Lane concludes that Calvin was usually accurate in the gist of his citations, although he was very selective in the choice of his references. Also, as is still common in polemics, Calvin sometimes cited certain fathers when they agreed with him and ignored them when they didn't.

However, many of Lane's theses will also be of interest to the general reader. First and foremost is Calvin's impressive knowledge of the fathers and several medieval writers, particularly Bernard of Clairvaux. In his commentaries he also frequently utilized the exegetical writings of Chrysostom. Most of the references to early church fathers in his theological writings, however, were used for polemical purposes. Although Scripture was normative for Calvin, in arguing with his Roman Catholic opponents, he was eager to show that the new evangelical faith stood in continuity with the faith of the early church. By today's standards of scholarship Calvin's argumentation will not always pass muster, but for his time, his use of the fathers was "masterly."

I have only touched the surface of what is a prodigious work of scholarship that will not be superseded for many years.

I. John Hesselink

The Local Churches in a Global Era: Reflections for a New Century, edited by Max Stackhouse, Tim Dearborn, and Scott Paeth, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. 281pp., \$15.00 (paper).

How shall we embrace our evangelical Christian faith in such a way that we balance tolerance for the beliefs of others with our response to the great commission? According

to the contributors to this volume, Christian education in a multicultural world requires three doctrinal emphases: the trinity, covenant, and reconciliation. Edification, moral regard for all persons, discernment, hope, and prayer are all necessary ingredients in inter-faith conversation.

The world needs the church, and the church for the world's sake must engage in a theology of technology. We have entered a new era of unprecedented human control over human beings through genetics, pharmacology, and other medical practices. Christians historically have cared for the sick, fed and sheltered the poor, alleviated suffering, and exercised a just compassion. But marriage and gender models have changed. In response to technological changes the church must continue to emphasize the spirit, wholeness, and health.

Helpful chapters consider the nature of Buddhism and Muhammad's significance for Christians. "Muslims understand better than Christians the significance of religion not just as something we *think* about—not just as a cognitive affair—but as something we *act* on and *act* out." A chapter highlights conflicts between evangelicals and Orthodox Christians, and between Muslims and Christians.

Is it possible for local congregations to move past institutional survival and status concerns to engage the world? What is God doing in our world? The authors suggest that local congregations be signs of hope, keys to community, offering a sense of personal significance and living out an alternative lifestyle. Local churches are called to nurture the dream of the kingdom of God, where all sorrows cease and all injustices end. This book addresses some of the issues facing local churches set in a multicultural context. It also contains helpful resources for worship.

Robert J. Hoeksema

More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History, edited by Larry Eskridge and Mark A. Noll, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. ix, 429pp., \$20.00.

This book consists of essays presented at a conference sponsored by the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton

College and funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment. The subject of the conference was "Evangelicals and Finance." Most of the presenters were college professors and administrators such as Robin Klay and John Lunn, professors at Hope College, and Joel Carpenter, provost of Calvin College. The essays are scholarly, well-documented, and well-edited.

The authors of the first essay, "American Evangelicalism and the National Economy, 1870-1997," define the word evangelical in this manner: "Evangelicals might be thought of as orthodox Christians influenced by Bible centered, revivalist modes of thought" (21). Non-evangelicals are not only the liberals in mainline denominations, but also "those Protestants in confessional or ethnic denominations, such as . . . Dutch . . . Reformed groups" (21). However, in the opinion of this reviewer, this definition of evangelical is too narrow for it excludes all members of the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church. Many of the essays though seem to presume a broader definition of the term rather than the restrictive one offered in the first essay.

The two essays in the third section of the book, Concluding Observations, challenge the reader to see the need of a good understanding of the Reformed world and life view which can provide the necessary theological foundation for Christians. In order to understand how to finance Christian colleges, seminaries, and local churches from a biblical, but not biblicistic, point of view, careful reflection on the ramifications of a Reformed world and life view is necessary. These chapters are especially helpful in clarifying issues in regard to money and ministry in whatever form ministry is taken or understood.

Elton J. Bruins

The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary, by Arland J. Hultgren, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. xxix, 522 p., \$35.00.

The author is known for works with scholarly depth and yet being helpful to those who are not scholars. Those works include *Jesus and His Adversaries*; *The Rise of Normative Christianity*; and *Christ and His Benefits*. He is professor of New Testament at

Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. This reviewer agrees with those who have described this book as the best available on the parables and as one to which preachers and teachers will return as to a faithful and reliable friend.

Hultgren describes his work in its preface as having the purpose of filling a void in publications on the parables which is "a study of the parables that is comprehensive, drawing upon the wealth of parable research, and that is at the same time exegetical and theological" (xi). He places thirty-eight parables (including parallel versions in the four canonical gospels and the Gospel of Thomas) into seven groups on the themes of: The Revelation of God, Exemplary Behavior, Wisdom, Life Before God, Final Judgment, Allegorical Parables, and Parables of the Kingdom. Generally each parable is dealt with by his own translation, notes on the text and translation, exegetical commentary, exposition, and a select bibliography.

Following the commentaries, there is a chapter on the Evangelists as interpreters of Jesus' parables and a chapter on the parables in the Gospel of Thomas. These are followed by three appendices on the purpose of the parables according to the Evangelists, the three parables of Luke 15, and the meaning of the Greek word, *doulos*. Finally, there is a general bibliography and three indexes of Scripture references, other ancient sources, and modern authors.

This general description of the content is an indication as to why the work has been termed the best available on the parables. It touches on many facets of the scholarship available today on the parables of Jesus, and the length of the bibliographies indicates the author's erudition. There is even a reference to this reviewer's work on the parable of the sheep and goats as reviewed in *Reformed Review* in 1986.

Hultgren says his work is "primarily for the sake of interpreting the parables of Jesus within the Christian Church" (17). As with all interpreters, his theology at times stands out in the commentary which may at one time be seen as traditional and at another as challenging and far-reaching. Regarding the meaning of the parable of the sower in Luke, he writes: "The gospel itself transforms the heart . . . but when and where that transformation will take place is the decision of God, who is ever an electing God" (199). Regarding the meaning of the

parable of the last judgement in Matthew 25, he writes: "The old argument that one must be religious in order to be moral . . . goes by the board. The down-to-earth service of the person in need – without any sense of religious obligation or motivation – that is service to Christ! Christ's true servants, then, know nothing about him, but seek only to serve the neighbor" (326-327). And finally, while he says that the parables cannot mean anything one wants them to, he writes in the introductory chapter, "the interpretations that follow are . . . hardly exhaustive, and definitely not final" (19).

David W. Jurgens

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment, by T. Richard Snyder, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001. xii, 159 pp., \$18.00.

Dostoyevsky believed that the soul of a society can be measured by its prisons, and Snyder proposes that "our culture is captive to a spirit of punishment" (3) and that this spirit arises to some extent from the dominant understanding of nature and grace within popular Protestant religion today. It lacks an emphasis on creation grace and understands redemptive grace almost exclusively in individualistic, internalized, non-historical terms. To remedy this situation, Snyder explores foundations for restorative justice within the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The emphasis on redemption has caused us to lose sight of the grace that is present in all creation, in Snyder's opinion, and this has often produced a view of criminals as less than human. Furthermore, the individualization of redemption has led us to take no collective responsibility for the crimes done in our society and to seek no redemption of the corporate reality. This makes high rates of recidivism inevitable.

In place of the emphasis on restorative justice, Snyder describes some models of restorative justice which seek to restore relationships rather than to maintain power. He offers examples from South Africa, Sweden, New Zealand, the native American community, and some initiatives being taken within parts of the dominant U.S. system. The major challenge for the U.S. system is deemed to be the habilitation (rather than rehabilitation)

of those in prison, so that justice is transformative, not just restorative.

In the biblical themes of covenant, the Incarnation and the Trinity, Snyder finds the foundations for a Christian contribution to restorative justice. He finally offers concrete suggestions of ways in which congregations can become involved to prisoners which will contribute to their redemption and the transformation of society. He also outlines directions for public policy to achieve a more constructive program of justice. Both the theological analysis of the current situation in the American system of justice and the practical suggestions for reforming it will be helpful to Christians wanting to make a gospel based difference in one of the more difficult but necessary areas of Christian ministry today.

Terrance Tiessen

Systematic Theology, Volume 3, by Wolfhart Pannenberg (translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998. 713 pp., \$49.00.

My first exposure to the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg came during a graduate theology course, in the early 1980s. That time could be termed Pannenberg's pre-*Systematic Theology* era. The required textbooks for the course explored the themes: *Revelation as History, Basic Questions in Theology, Jesus – God and Man, Theology and the Philosophy of Science*. These thematic studies served as prolegomena to Pannenberg's magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*. And we now have all three volumes of Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* translated into English.

The previous two volumes looked at the theology of God and Christ respectively. Volume three examines the outline of the third article of the Apostle's Creed, the Third Person of the Trinity, the church and eschatology.

In chapter twelve (the count continues from the previous volume), "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God, and the Church," Pannenberg interprets the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the church as it is related to the world. In chapter thirteen, he examines the church as a communion of saints (i.e., the fellowship of believers), the saving work of the Spirit in individuals, and the sacraments, ministry, and unity of the church.

Chapter fourteen is an excursus on "Election and History." In the last chapter of this volume, Pannenberg describes his eschatology, elucidating such doctrines as the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting, which reflects his doctrine that God is coming in the future.

Pannenberg has provided an important guideline for theology in the twenty-first century. His theology is scripturally referenced, scholarly, historically based, and logical. Such scholarly arguments go against the grain of our visually oriented culture. In our post-modern culture, Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* provides an essential, provocative overview of theology for the pastor and preacher.

Barry L. Wynveen

Where Needs Meet Rights: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in a New Perspective, by Berna Klein Goldewijk and Bas de Gaa Fortman, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999. xiv, 146 pp., \$9.95.

This book develops new perspectives on the relationship between human needs and rights. These rights include an adequate standard of living, housing, education, work, food, health care, equal pay for equal work, and the rights of minorities to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion and communicate in their own language. The authors' primary concerns are poverty, displacement, and vulnerability.

Of particular interest to clergy is the section on human dignity and transcendence, which points out that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam link human dignity to creation, or to the human being as the image of God.

Consider the widow in Jesus' parable who presses the unjust judge for justice time and time again, until he finally gives in. "In resistance to what people feel is basically wrong lies the secret of legitimacy as a weapon against legality in situations where needs meet rights," say the authors. They quote a 17th century song that states: "Laws grind the poor, and rich men make the law."

We turn the poor away by using these mechanisms:

1. We reverse responsibilities and blame the poor for their own destitution. In this

way, the poor are seen as offenders rather than victims.

2. We see poverty as an inevitable fact of life. The poor become objects of exploitation rather than mere neglect.
3. We close our eyes, diverting our attention to sporting events, tabloid gossip and advertisements.
4. We deport them, delegating responsibility for them to humanitarian organizations and church aid agencies.

Books like this stimulate thinking and motivate action.

Robert J. Hoeksema