

Book Reviews

Called to Teach: The Vocation of the Presbyterian Educator, edited by Duncan S. Ferguson and William J. Weston, Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2003. xi, 223 pp., \$19.95.

Contours of Christology in the New Testament, edited by Richard N. Longenecker, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. xiv, 345pp., \$28.00 (paper).

The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory, by Donald G. Bloesch, Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2004. 336pp.

Mentoring for Mission: Nurturing New Faculty at Church-Related Colleges, by Caroline J. Simon. Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004. ix, 129 pp., \$14.00.

Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 1: Prolegomena, by Herman Bavinck, translated by John Vriend and edited by John Bolt, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. 685pp., \$49.99.

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The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to Luther and St. John of the Cross, by Rowan Williams, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cowley, 2003. 207pp., \$14.95.

McGrath, Alister E., *A Scientific Theology, vol. 3: Theory*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. 297 pp.

An Essay Review: Vocation, Individual and Institutional

George Brown, Jr.

Three recent books invite reflection on vocation and higher education today. One book explores vocation primarily from the perspective of those engaged in theological education as teachers. Another focuses on vocation from the institutional perspective of the church-related college. The third book looks at vocation in Presbyterian-affiliated schools through both individual and institutional lenses. The viewpoint of two of the three books reflects a distinctively Reformed spirit, while one book is more ecumenical in character. All books include multiple authors. The three books, listed in the order in which they were published, are:

The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher, edited by Gregory L. Jones and Stephanie Paulsell, Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002. xii, 263 pp., \$20.00.

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Mentoring for Mission: Nurturing New Faculty at Church-Related Colleges, by Caroline J. Simon. Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004. ix, 129 pp., \$14.00.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Christian institutions of higher learning and those who teach in them wrestled with questions of identity. Denominationally affiliated colleges and seminaries reflected on questions of institutional identity and vocation. Seminary and college professors also stepped back to reflect on the nature of their vocation. The three books featured in this review essay offer help in listening on these important conversations.

First, a brief description of each book is in order. *The Scope of Our Art* (2002) sets out to explore two questions:

“How ought the relationship between an individual’s vocation and an institution’s mission be understood?”

“How does one’s sense of vocation help one negotiate a path through the demands of the several constituencies that make claims on the theological teacher?”¹

The book, whose title is drawn from a saying of Gregory of Nazianzen,² is divided into three parts. One could think of the three-part structure of the book’s essays in terms of study, teaching, and institutional life. They center on three loci of a theological

¹ Jones and Paulsell, *The Scope of Our Art*, viii.

² “The scope of our art is to give wings to the soul,” p. xi.

teacher's life: desk, classroom, and school. The five essays in the first part, "Formative Practices of the Theological Teacher's Vocation," focus on study and include explorations of writing and reading as spiritual disciplines. Four essays in the second part of the book examine four models of the teaching vocation: teaching as conversation, as a ministry of hope, as the cultivation of wisdom, and as ceaseless prayer. Institutional life is the focus on the third part.

Called to Teach (2003) is divided into three sections: "Foundations," "Engagement," and "Application." The chapters in the first section examine the biblical, theological, and historical foundations of the call to teach. The perspective of these chapters is distinctively Presbyterian and Reformed, reflecting the book's focus on Presbyterian higher education in North America. Chapter 5, "The American Presbyterian College," presents a useful typology of Presbyterian colleges. Case studies are the focus of the third section of the book. Chapter 8 presents case studies representing the three types of relationship between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the almost seventy colleges and universities that have some denominational connection. Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee, is presented as an example of the "dimensional" type; Waynesburg College in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, is presented as an example of the "pervasive" type; and Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, is presented as an example of the "historical" type. Because this volume focuses on the vocation of the teacher in Presbyterian higher education, the discussion is not limited to teaching in colleges but includes theological education as well.

In *Mentoring for Mission* (2004), the third book included in this review essay, eight professors teaching at church-related colleges collaborate to provide guidance for mentoring new faculty. The authors understand mentoring as an "exercise in practical wisdom."³ Practical wisdom is a virtue intended to help people live well. Because it is experiential, there is no pattern that will fit every context perfectly. The first three chapters elaborate on three principle insights of practical wisdom for mentoring: mentoring is relational – it is related to the mission of the church-related college; mentoring is local – it is shaped by the context of a specific college; and mentoring is personal – it takes into account the gifts and needs of individual professors. Helping faculty "own" the school's mission is the primary aim of the authors. The wisdom it offers is indeed practical; topics include stewardship of time, overcoming isolation, and encouraging professional development.

Collaboration is a thread that connects these three books. None was the work of a single author. While two are edited collections of articles and essays, the third had multiple authors. Two grew out of conferences convened to explore issues in higher education and vocation. They represent a significant collective wisdom on the theme of vocation in higher education.

³ Simon, *Mentoring for Mission*, 4.

It should be noted also that these books were all published within a three-year period, reflecting something of the sense of urgency surrounding conversations around institutional identity and vocation. And it is not coincidental that two of the three books were published by the Grand Rapids (Michigan) publishing house of William B. Eerdmans. As a cursory survey of the annotated bibliography in this issue of the *Reformed Review* will indicate, Eerdmans has published a number of the recent titles in higher education. The publisher is to be commended for making a significant contribution to the literature on higher education, especially in the area of church-affiliated institutions.

Vocation is typically viewed as an individual matter. A person has a vocation. Teaching is viewed as a vocation. Caroline J. Simon and her colleagues write, “We believe that being a teacher/scholar is not just a job but can be fruitfully seen as a vocation or calling in the theological sense.”⁴ The authors of essays in *Called to Teach* trace the deep biblical and theological roots of the vocation of the teacher.

But vocation is also institutional. Colleges, universities, divinity schools, and seminaries have mission statements that reflect their distinctive vocations as educational institutions. For William Weston, the vocation of Presbyterian education has been “to produce leaders who act as stewards of all levels of society – and not just for the Presbyterian Church . . .”⁵

There is a sense, however, in which individual and institutional vocations are interdependent. As William Weston and Dale Soden note, “Faculty hiring and faculty culture are the single most important determinants of what the college is at any given moment.”⁶ Faculty help shape the vocational identity of a college. Similarly, the institutional heritage and culture works to shape faculty, individually and collectively.

Not that this interdependence is without its tensions, as L. Gregory Jones and others point out.⁷ The tension between the individual’s sense of vocation and that of the institution where he or she teaches is particularly acute when it comes to the three traditional values by which faculty performance is measured: teaching, scholarship, and service. Caroline Simon and her colleagues emphasize the benefits of mentoring in order to help new faculty members negotiate the tension between institutional and personal values and visions surrounding these three performance areas.

⁴ Simon, *Mentoring for Mission*, p. 8.

⁵ William Weston, “The Dying Light and Glowing Embers of Presbyterian Higher Education” in Ferguson and Weston, *Called to Teach*, 5.

⁶ William Weston and Dale Soden, “The American Presbyterian College,” in Ferguson and Weston, *Called to Teach*, 69.

⁷ L. Gregory Jones, “Negotiating the Tensions of Vocation,” in Jones and Paulsell, *The Scope of Our Art*, 209-224.

Both *Called to Teach* and *Mentoring for Mission* offer typologies for classifying and thinking about church-related colleges. Both offer specific examples of each type in the form of a case study. *Called to Teach* identifies three distinct expressions of vocation among Presbyterian institutions of higher learning: the historical, dimensional, and the pervasive.⁸ Rhodes College is presented as an example of the historical type of church-related Presbyterian college.⁹ This type has a written covenant with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). While it does not try to hide its historical connection to the Reformed tradition, it does seek to be nonsectarian and open to diversity. Maryville is offered as an example of the dimensional type of church-related Presbyterian college.¹⁰ Presbyterian colleges of this type are intentional about cultivating a church relationship. Like the historical type, colleges like Maryville seek to be nonsectarian and diverse. Waynesburg is presented as an example of the pervasive type church-related Presbyterian college.¹¹ In this type of church-related Presbyterian college, every area of the college is developed in relation to Christian faith. According to a study cited by William Weston and Dale Soden, 45 percent of church-related Presbyterian colleges are of the Historical type and 45 percent are of the dimensional type of church-related Presbyterian college, while about 10 percent of the church-related Presbyterian colleges are of the pervasive type.¹²

In the concluding chapter of *Called to Teach*, Duncan S. Ferguson suggests that the dimensional type might be the future direction for most Presbyterian affiliated institutions of higher learning. He observes

The risk for those institutions in the category of historical is that they may be viewed as essentially secular in character, and the risk for those in the category of pervasive is that they may be viewed as sectarian in character. The category of dimensional offers a way of living between the times, nurturing the finest expression of the founding principles of the institutions, yet open to the new realities in our society and world.¹³

Mentoring for Mission also offers a three-fold typology of church-related institutions: purist, critical mass, and pluralist.¹⁴ Caroline Simon and her colleagues build on a

⁸ Weston and Soden, *Called to Teach*, 65f.

⁹ Stephen Haynes, "Rhodes College: More Than Historical," in Ferguson and Weston, *Called to Teach*,: 121-129.

¹⁰ Margaret (Peggy) Parks Cowan, "The Vocation of Teaching at Maryville College" in Ferguson and Weston, *Called to Teach*, 107-114.

¹¹ Jeffrey Kisner, "Faith and Learning at Waynesburg College" in Ferguson and Weston, *Called to Teach*,: 114-121.

¹² Weston and Soden, *Called to Teach*, 65.

¹³ Duncan S. Ferguson, "The Dawning of the Light" in Ferguson and Weston, *Called to Teach*,: 171.

¹⁴ Simon, 31-34.

typology originally developed by Robert Benne.¹⁵ Benne developed a four-fold typology:

Orthodox – in which the Christian vision is pervasive

Critical Mass – in which Christianity or a particular tradition within Christianity has a privileged voice

Intentionally Pluralist – in which Christianity is one voice among many

Accidentally Pluralist – in which there is no public acknowledgment of the institution's Christian heritage¹⁶

Simon and her colleagues refined Benne's typology, compressing it into three types: purist (consisting of denominational, evangelical, and ecumenical), Critical Mass (consisting of denominational and broadly Christian), and Pluralist.¹⁷ In a later work, James C. Kennedy and Caroline Simon located the three church-related colleges of the Reformed Church in America within a further refinement of Benne's typology. They viewed Central College as a critical-mass or pluralist type, Northwestern College as a comprehensive evangelical/Reformed type, and Hope College as something of a hybrid consisting of a middle way between the pluralist and critical-mass Reformed/comprehensive ecumenical types in the 1990s.¹⁸

Simon and her colleagues argue that new faculty need to be mentored into the institution's mission. William Weston and Dale Soden support this argument. They write,

It is in faculty hiring and promotion that the college's vision matters most. If it does not consistently reward faculty members for advancing the college's vision, then they will start to pursue some other vision. The usual alternatives that fill such a vacuum are the professional research standards of the separate academic disciplines. These are valuable standards in their place, but they are not enough to guide teaching. Moreover, if faculty members owe more to the professional research culture of their disciplines than to the common mission of the college, the institution will start to dissolve or be pulled apart.¹⁹

In the last section of *The Scope of Our Art*, several authors highlight the tensions that can exist between individual and institutional understandings of vocation. L. Gregory Jones in a helpful essay not only identifies the tensions between individual and

¹⁵ Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2001).

¹⁶ Simon, *Mentoring for Mission*, 31-32.

¹⁷ Simon, *Mentoring for Mission*, 33. In *Can Hope Endure? A Historical Case Study in Christian Higher Education*, which Simon co-authored with James C. Kennedy (The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). Benne's orthodox category is replaced by Kennedy and Simon's term "comprehensive." Cf. p. 18.

¹⁸ Kennedy and Simon, *Can Hope Endure?*, 210.

¹⁹ Weston and Soden, *Called to Teach*, 69.

institutional vocations, he also shares how he has worked at negotiating these tensions.²⁰

There are some interesting possibilities for conversations among contributors to the different books. For example, Darwin Glassford's article "The Biblical Foundations of Presbyterian Education," in *Called to Teach* identifies four "related and essential components" of the teaching vocation in the context of the reign or kingdom of God. Drawing on various biblical texts, Glassford discusses instruction, modeling, training, and discerning.²¹ Susan Simonaitis, Paul J. Wadell, Lois Malcolm, and Michael Battle, contributors to *The Scope of Our Art*, offer four views of teaching: teaching as conversation, teaching as a ministry of hope, teaching as the cultivation of wisdom for a complex world, and teaching (and learning) as ceaseless prayer.²² These five authors invite the reader to engage in a rich dialogue about the teaching vocation as viewed from different angles.

These three books remind readers that vocation is both individual and institutional. They highlight the relationship between teaching as an individual calling and teaching as an institutional calling. They identify some of the tensions inherent in this relationship. They encourage those engaged in higher education in church-related institutions to reflect on the individual and institutional aspects of vocation. Finally, they invite the churches who support institutions of higher learning to join the conversation on vocation in higher education as it relates to church-affiliated institutions of higher learning.

-George Brown, Jr.

²⁰ Jones, *The Scope of Our Art*, 209-224.

²¹ Glassford, *Called to Teach*;, 14-18.

²² Susan M. Simonaitis, "Teaching as Conversation;" Paul J. Wadell, "Teaching as a Ministry of Hope;" "Teaching as Cultivating Wisdom for a Complex World;" and Michael Battle, "Teaching and Learning as Ceaseless Prayer;" in *The Scope of Our Art*, pp. 99-119, 120-34, 135-54, and 155-70 respectively.

Contours of Christology in the New Testament, Richard N. Longenecker, ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. xiv, 345pp., \$28.00 (paper).

Readers who seek to understand their theology in relation to current biblical studies are often caught by the tendency of reliable studies to be overly technical and the tendency of popular writings to push private agendas. This collection of essays edited by Richard Longenecker is a welcome contribution. The essays are written by a group of leading evangelical scholars who are specialists in the Jewish background of Christianity and the various books of the New Testament. The work of other scholars is amply documented, and there are selected bibliographies at the end of each essay. But there are no footnotes; books and articles that the writers borrow from are cited in the text in parentheses, making smooth reading more difficult at places. However, the main issues are clearly explained.

I shall pass on a few of the insights in this collection that relate to questions I hear from students and seekers. According to Richard N. Longenecker, the earliest Christological formulas in the New Testament derive from the forms of corporate worship, and the reason Christians today often do not recognize them for what they are is that we no longer use these formulas in our liturgies (71, 74). Longenecker suggests that scholarship can be helped or hindered by our practices of worship.

Essays by I. Howard Marshall and Richard Bauckham counter the general assumption that the Christology of the synoptic gospels is lower than that of John, which implies a gradual drift toward higher Christology through the first century. Marshall tackles recent arguments that the book of Acts preserves an early adoptionist or “exaltationist” Christology – the idea that Jesus did not become Messiah until the Resurrection. Acts 2:36 (“God has made him both Lord and Messiah”) must be read in light of Luke’s description of the Annunciation and Jesus’ baptism and of Luke 4:18-19, where Jesus is presented as the messianic bearer of the Spirit from the very beginning of his life and ministry. The reason for reaffirming this status in Acts 2 was twofold: Jesus’ messiahship had been called into question by the crucifixion, and his lordship was now extended over all the cosmos (141). For Marshall, however, the idea that Jesus has a divine “nature” is not very clear in Luke-Acts (142).

Richard Bauckham points out that standard ways in which Second Temple Jews defined the deity of the one God Yahweh are applied to Jesus in nearly all of the New Testament writings, resulting in a “Christology of divine identity.” The distinctive of the Gospel of John is that it uses Old Testament motifs to reaffirm monotheism in an unambiguous manner (148). In John, Jesus is included in the identity of the one and only God by the attribution of divine prerogatives like universal sovereignty, giving life to all, and exercising judgment on all. Contrary to many other scholars, these prerogatives are not mere functions that God might delegate to others: rather they belong to the Jewish understanding of who their God is (152). As God’s unique agent

who is invested with complete power, Jesus stands in for God and is truly God in the fullest sense as evidenced by the set of seven “I am he” sayings (159, 163). Where John’s Christology steps outside the categories of Jewish monotheism is in its portrayal of an intra-divine relationship of Father and Son within the one true God (164-65).

Finally, J. Ramsey Michaels argues convincingly that the book of James, named after the leader of the Torah-observant Christian Jews, applies Old Testament motifs to Jesus in such a way that “‘the Lord’ of the Hebrew Bible and ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ are one and the same” (273). Michaels effectively counters the long-standing assumption that James has a much “lower,” more functional Christology than Paul (270).

In these and other chapters there is a wealth of helpful ideas. This volume would make an excellent introduction for students of New Testament Christology.

– Christopher B. Kaiser

The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory, by Donald G. Bloesch. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2004. 336pp.

As true to the scriptural record as he can be, Bloesch affirms both a universalist and a “particularist” strand in the Bible, which “coexist in paradoxical tension” (p. 234). For example, he writes, “The kingdom of God is intended to include all people, but only those with faith enjoy what it has to offer” (238). This sounds traditional enough.

Yet Bloesch goes further. Lack of faith leads to hell. However, “hell is not parallel to heaven, but preparatory to heaven. . . . Hell is a reality in heaven, not alongside of heaven. Only one kingdom will be left standing – the eternal kingdom of God” (238).

Bloesch upholds a “reverent agnosticism” regarding the ultimate fate of the wicked. For our author, “Christ, not Satan, is the king in hell. Hell does not eclipse heaven but is made to serve heaven. . . . Good triumphs over evil; heaven is not limited by hell, but overthrows hell” (239).

Bloesch argues against annihilation, universalism, double-predestination, and reincarnation and describes his own views as “divine perseverance.” In this view:

God loves all and pursues all into the darkness of sin and hell. The paradox is that God’s grace accomplishes its goal but in and through human determination. . . . The future is open rather than closed, for even beyond the pale of death, God’s grace is at work bringing all souls into subjection to the authority and lordship of

Christ. How God's grace triumphs when sin persists is a mystery that is past human comprehension. . . . (240)

Our author affirms the "triumph of grace," leading to the ultimate restoration of all things (Rev. 21:5), and yet is at pains to insist there are consequences (perhaps eternal) to human decision-making. Like most of us, he is uncertain about the ultimate human ability to resist God's grace. You can tell he really wants to say, "NO, no one can ultimately completely resist God, God's love and wrath against sin." Grace is greater than sin. God pursues all even to hell. Christ's death and resurrection triumph over hell. Those consigned to hell must still acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus "whether in fear or in love" (228, 235).

I appreciate Bloesch's careful treatment, but there are some difficulties, perhaps even contradictions. For example, Bloesch says he is against annihilationism (239), yet he also writes: "we may perhaps allow for the possibility of a universal restoration of the lost, but we must also equally admit the possibility of the fall of unbelieving humanity into nothingness" (235). Bloesch says he rejects double-predestination (239), yet he writes:

Christian experience confirms that when we believe, we are moved to do so through Christ's Spirit working within us (cf. 1 Cor 15:10; Phil 2:12, 13). When we resist and defy God's plan of salvation it is God who is withholding his grace, thereby preventing us from faith and obedience. (240)

This last sentence comes perilously close to making God responsible for your and my unbelief. Yet, to his credit, Dr. Bloesch does take the consequences of human action seriously.

He finally leaves us with a challenge wrapped in the mystery:

We must also insist that those on the way to heaven must retain hope for the whole of human creation, even for the lost and rejected. Hell, like heaven, can be made to glorify God, for hell is an attribute of God's justice. It is also a demonstration of God's love. We must not teach the whole-sale emptying of hell, but we can hope that some, perhaps even many, might be reclaimed for salvation." (p. 240)

My (our) thanks to the professor for wrestling with these imponderables during our efforts to point people to the joy of communion with our Lord of Lords and King of Kings through all time and eternity.

— John R. Kleinheksel, Sr.

Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 1: Prolegomena, by Herman Bavinck, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. 685pp., \$49.99.

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) has been called a "greater theologian" than Abraham Kuyper, his neo-Calvinist contemporary and predecessor at the Free University of Amsterdam (I. John Hesselink, *On Being Reformed*, p. 110). In the introduction of this volume, John Bolt provides a helpful synopsis of Bavinck's life and thought and an overview of the Prolegomena.

This volume's theological methodology demonstrates Bavinck's grasp of the various disciplines of theology: historical, biblical, philosophical, and systematic. Furthermore, he fully grasps the *Sitz im Leben* of his own times. His questions in this book address the 1876 Law Concerning Higher Education, a legislation that transformed the theology departments of the Dutch universities into departments of religious studies. Bavinck battled the prevailing winds in theology which were influenced by Hegelian rationalism, Kantian moralism, and the human religious experientialism of Schleiermacher. He also reveals a remarkable knowledge of psychology and world religions.

Although written over a century ago, *Reformed Dogmatics* still addresses contemporary theological issues. In this volume, Bavinck addresses such epistemological questions as the relationship between faith and science: scriptural inspiration and interpretation; relationships with non-Christian religions, and assorted other challenges in our current environment. Bavinck unabashedly grounds his theology on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics: Prolegomena* still speaks to us today as we struggle to maintain our Reformed heritage in an increasingly Arminian culture. It also speaks as we struggle with an increasing secularism, in a growing experientialism which has become anti-intellectual.

– Barry L. Wynveen

War or Words? Interreligious Dialogue as an Instrument of Peace, ed. Donald W. Musser and D. Dixon Sutherland. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005. 247pp.

In this volume, twelve outstanding essayists address the issue of religious fundamentalism and public policy. The book is dedicated to the proposition: "No world peace without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions" (Hans Kung).

Part one deals with issues in the dialogue among religions and opens with an essay by Hans Kung. Kung advocates what he calls a "New Paradigm," which "entails policies of regional reconciliations, understanding, and cooperation instead of the modern national politics of self-interest, power, and prestige" (p. 12).

Martin Cook cogently discusses the limits of the traditional "just war" theory. He argues that "the particular form of just war embodied in most international law of the modern period is conceptually ill-equipped to guide us in thinking about the war against terrorism" (p. 33). Instead of this traditional approach, he advocates that "the world community can come together on shared definitions of conduct of what will and will not be acceptable behavior" (34).

Muslim violence is addressed by John Kelsay, who objects to Usama bin Laden's "Fatwah" in which he cites the *Qur'an* "to fight and slay the pagans" (*Qur'an* 9:5). Over against this, Kelsay quotes another Qur'anic passage: "Fight against those who are fighting you. But do not violate the limits. God does not approve those who violate the limits" (*Qur'an* 2:190).

Part two discusses obstacles to religious dialogue, including absolute truth claims (Charles Kimball), women as "warriors" or "doves" (Valarie Ziegler), Latin American liberation theologies (Daniel M. Bell); and certain "revitalization movements" like the quest for an idealized past by American and Islamic fundamentalists (John Mohawk).

Part three describes ways of moving toward dialogue and concludes with an essay by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz presenting "a theo-ethics of reconciliation that will contribute to make justice a reality" (185). Isasi-Diaz points out that "reconciliation is possible only when persons recognize that they have been unjustly oppressed and also that they have been unjust oppressors" (185).

I commend the relevance and sensitive treatment of this vital topic to our readership. These are momentous times. We need to hear the voices of those who are speaking and acting for dialogue instead of violence to solve long-standing injustices, misconceptions, and behaviors. Will the children of Abraham find a way to talk to one another with mutual respect, or will blood continue to cry out from God's wounded earth, begging for redress which only reconcilers can effect?

—John R. Kleinheksel, Sr

What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage, by David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005. xii, 189pp., \$17.95.

This timely volume is a marriage-affirming book that raises questions and offers answers to a social environment often toxic to marriage, whether it be through uncommitted sex on TV, the violent debasement of persons in video games, pornography, or tax laws that militate against marriage.

Without stridency the authors seek common ground among believers. This common ground begins with a deep commitment to heterosexual marriage and all the benefits it confers for couples and their children in emotional, physical, educational and economic well-being. But if marriage is such a good thing, shouldn't it be extended to all?

Addressing this question in fairness requires a discussion of sexual orientation, which in turn leads to the question of whether that orientation can be changed. Here the emphasis is placed on scientific studies, although Myers is scrupulous in pointing out what these studies do and do not prove.

The authors show high respect for the Bible as they seek to understand what scripture does and does not say about homosexuality. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book for every sincere Christian who is serious about being obedient to scripture.

In contrast to those who see gay marriage as a threat, the authors present reasons why gay marriage will in fact strengthen the institution of marriage, and thus society in general.

For those uncertain about the issue, as well as those who wonder why anyone could be in favor of gay marriage, this will be a helpful book in evaluating reasons, and such evidence as there is to support those reasons. Everyone interested in the integrity of the exegesis of scripture and the integrity of marriage should engage this book.

– Donald J. Bruggink

The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to Luther and St. John of the Cross, by Rowan Williams, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cowley, 2003. 207pp., \$14.95.

Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, has written a short introduction to the history of Christian spirituality. Originally published in 1990, this work presents a vision of New Testament spirituality and follows this vision through much of the church's history.

William's understanding of spirituality is suggested in the book's title. The goal of spirituality is knowledge of God. However, this knowledge is not merely conceptual; it is neither gnostic nor platonic. Rather:

The end of the believer's life is knowledge of God *in* conformity to God... it is sharing what God is—more boldly, you might say, sharing God's "experience." God is known in and by the exercise of crucifying compassion; if we are like him in that, we know him. (13)

It is William's brief exploration of New Testament spirituality that I found both helpful and challenging. Williams points to the religious "crisis" presented in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is the pattern of God's work in this world, and this pattern is surprising in its depth and breadth. Jesus' spirituality is not an ecstatic vision nor a triumphal escape:

If we believe we can experience our healing without deepening our hurt, we have understood nothing of the roots of our faith; Jesus' obedience in the circumstances of his earthly life, in temptation and fear, "with loud cries and tears" (Heb. 5.7), is what opens the long-closed door between God and men's hearts." (10)

Williams goes on to explore various theologians whose writings resonate with and deepen our understanding of this spirituality, as well as those who do not. The list includes Ignatius, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine, Antony the Great and the desert fathers, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Luther, and St. John of the Cross. Williams provides a short but helpful description of his sources, including both primary sources and influential secondary sources. My personal list of theologians to read (and re-read) has been expanded a good deal by this short introduction.

—Jon Garbison

McGrath, Alister E., *A Scientific Theology, vol. 3: Theory*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. 297 pp.

With this volume, McGrath concludes his three-volume series entitled, *A Scientific Theology*. Having argued in volume one for the recovery of recognizing the natural world as "creation," and in volume two for the recognition of an ontological status to the things with which systematic theology deals, McGrath sets out in volume three to argue that the assertions of specifically doctrinal statements and systems can be made and criticized by theologians in much the same way as the assertions of specifically theoretical statements can be made and criticized by scientists.

It is a bold agenda; one which McGrath himself concedes is only in the infancy of being advanced but that, in this reviewer's opinion, is a worthy one when considered in the light of the church's need to have its competency as both a custodian and proclaimer of the gospel sustained in the eyes of a culture that views both the church and the gospel with indifference and confusion.

McGrath begins by describing theory as a *communal beholding of reality* and then proceeds to show how theorization is a proper modality for the articulation of Christian doctrine. One of the more provocative of McGrath's assertions is the case he makes for the use of analogies in theological pronouncement, though not a use that is exhaustive or prescriptive. Instead, pointing to how analogical thinking is used by natural scientists working toward the articulation of their theories to explain natural phenomena, McGrath advocates a like use in the service of arriving at better systematic articulations of Christian doctrine.

McGrath's commentary on the tensions that have existed between theologians over the centuries with regard to the validity of analogical reasoning contains the example of the tension that existed between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner concerning the matter of God's self-revelation and how that revelation may be represented. Related to this is a fascinating comparison between the complementarity principle advocated by physicist Niels Bohr for talking about wave-particle duality, and the dialectic approach offered up by Karl Barth for talking about the two natures of Christ.

While the subject of a scientific theology may seem so esoteric as to be of little or no use to pastors in local congregations, there is within McGrath's argument a crucial insight with implications that are relevant to both his own work as a systematician and to the work of pastoral ministry. This insight has to do with McGrath's succinct analysis of the bankruptcy of two extreme approaches to epistemology; one being the Enlightenment's claim that human reason can achieve a completely objective perspective removed from the contingencies of social and historical context, the other being the claim of much post-modern thought that there is no legitimacy to truth claims that apply for jurisdiction outside of an individual's personal biases and conventionalities.

A third approach, advocated by McGrath and one that runs like a steady undercurrent throughout the remainder of his book, is that truth claims, like those made by a scientist, are mediated through the tradition of a community whose members subscribe to a certain set of values and ideals. The value and application of this insight extends far beyond the work done by systematic theologians such as McGrath or scientists like Niels Bohr. Indeed, those who preach and teach in local churches have known this for ages, albeit in a context that is vastly different from a physicist's laboratory; rather, they have known the importance of a community's shared knowledge of who they are, the shared story of their values and ideas, and the strength this provides to the task of speaking the gospel in truth and love.

McGrath's gift as a theologian lies in reconciling opposing viewpoints or in suggesting alternatives that are truly alternatives rather than elaborate criticisms of existing theories. In a brilliant response to the problem of the anomalies of evil, pain, and suffering that arise in contradiction to neatly packaged systems of theology that

articulate God's total sovereignty and total goodness, McGrath points to Charles Darwin's own assertion that his scientific theory of evolution, while falling short in a number of ways that he himself identified, would nonetheless be accepted as accurate with regard to the reality of the development of biological life. History has largely proved Darwin's assertion to be correct. Such a comparison between evolutionary theory and systematic theology as both operating in much the same way with regards to how they handle anomalies has the potential to provoke conversation among naturalists and theists alike.

—Derek De Jager