
Book Reviews

Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies, by Roy M. Anker, Eerdmans, 2004. 402pp, \$20.00

Christ the One and Only: A Global Affirmation of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ, edited by Sung Wook Chung, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. xviii, 240 pp, \$24.99.

Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender: Love of God and Love of Neighbor, by David Augsburg, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006. 245pp, \$19.99.

Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation, edited by James R. Krabill, Walter Sawatsky, and Charles E. Van Engen, New York: Orbis, 2006. xiv, 336pp., \$25.00.

Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels, by Craig A. Evans, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006. 290pp.

The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions, by George Sumner, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. vi, 219 pp, \$26.00.

The Four Voices of Preaching: Connecting Purpose and Identity Behind the Pulpit, edited by Robert Stephen Reid, Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006. 233pp., \$19.99.

God in Public: Four Ways American Christianity and Public Life Relate, by Mark C. Toulouse, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. xxiii, 269pp, \$19.95.

Growing Healthy Asian American Churches, edited by Peter Cha, S. Steve Kang, and Helen Lee, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006. 221pp, \$ 16.00.

John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian; The Shape of His Writings and Thought, by Randall C. Zachman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. 277pp. \$24.99

Kingdom, Office, and Church: A Study of A.A. van Ruler's Doctrine of Ecclesiastical Office, by Allan J. Janssen, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. xvi, 319pp, \$35.00.

Lesslie Newbigin. Missionary Theologian: A Reader, introduced and compiled by Paul Weston, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. x, 277pp, \$16.00 (paper).

The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, by Simon J. Gathercole, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. xi, 344pp, \$32.00 (paper).

Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation, by Herman Bavinck, translated by John Vriendand and edited by John Bolt, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. 697pp, \$49.99.

Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul, by Kevin J. Corcoran, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 152pp, \$18.99.

Talking With Christians, Musings of a Jewish Theologian, by David Novak, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. 269pp, \$25.00.

The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ in Dialogue with the Religions, edited by Massimo Serretti (translated by Teresa Talavera and David C. Schindler), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. xi, 163pp, \$22.00.

The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology, by Roger E. Olson, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004. xi, 328pp, \$39.95.

Worship and the Religious Affections: Shaping the Christian Life, Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. 184pp., \$24.95.

Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies, by Roy M. Anker, Eerdmans, 2004. 402pp, \$20.00

Anker titles his work *Catching Light*, both because that is literally what film does, and because the phrase captures the deep longing within people to experience a hint of the divine Light. This book is the convergence of “light catching” films and “Light seeking” people. The assumption being that in seeking Light, film offers a unique and important contribution to the search.

Because film is a *medium* Anker must commit ample room in the introduction to define and narrow the focus of his work. While he does not exclude films based on their difficulty, darkness, or the intention of either writer or director, he chooses films both broad and subtle in religiosity, artistically credible, and attempting to refract a ray of the divine Light.

The four parts of this book each deal with a different type of film. “Part I: Darkness Visible” may be the most difficult for Christians, as they plumb the darkness of the human condition (*The Godfather, Chinatown, The Deer Hunter*). “Part II: Light Shines in the Darkness” deals with films whose characters, while enduring hardship, find slivers of grace (*Tender Mercies, Places of the Heart, The Mission, Babette’s Feast*). “Part III: Fables of Light” are films that portray the fantastic becoming real and address the human desire for a hero to beat towering odds (*Star Wars, Superman, Spielberg films*). “Part IV: Found” represent those films whose characters experience the divine mystery but, “lack a ready frame of reference or perspective that will help make sense of it all” (*Grand Canyon, American Beauty, Three Colors: Blue*, 315).

For those people new to searching films for divine light, Anker’s Introduction and section prefaces offer a nice framework for understanding and categorizing films. Yet to understand fully how to use the tools of these categories, the reader should view several films and follow along with the film analyses that make up the majority of this book.

Anker references the debt he owes Fredrick Buechner’s *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy-Tale*. Reading this former work will yield a better understanding of what Anker is attempting to do. But, while *Catching Light* draws upon *Telling the Truth* it reciprocates by offering valuable clarifying examples of Buechner’s categories of Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy-Tale.

– Adam Navis

Christ the One and Only: A Global Affirmation of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ, edited by Sung Wook Chung, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. xviii, 240 pp, \$24.99.

This fine collection of essays defends the uniqueness of Christ against relativistic pluralism and probes the implications of this belief for Christian relationships with other religions. Six chapters examine essential aspects of Christology, with a view to their implications for the uniqueness of Christ and for inter-religious relationships. Topics include: the Incarnation (Elias Dantas), the life and teachings of Jesus (Clark Pinnock), Christ's suffering and death on the Cross (Graham Tomlin), his resurrection (Gabriel Fackre), his work as the unique revealer of God (Mark Thompson), and the Trinity (Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen). It is a good choice of themes; the essays have a cumulative effect without being repetitious. Readers gain helpful insights into these Christian doctrines and the exclusiveness of Jesus as the world's only Savior and Lord is well demonstrated.

Five chapters focus specifically on the implications of Christ's uniqueness for Christian relationships with adherents of other religions, including Judaism (Ellen Charry), Buddhism (Paul Chung, Sung Wook Chung), Islam (Ng Kam Weng), and Confucianism (K. K. Yeo). The book does not intend to answer the question whether the unevangelized can be saved but a number of the essayists explicitly state their belief that God does not restrict his saving work to the boundaries of the Church. On the other hand, the religions are not viewed as divinely intended instruments in God's saving work. A middle ground is sought between the condemnation of other religions as purely demonic and the uncritical approval of religions as complementary purveyors of common truth. The authors do not shrink from the scandal of Christian claims to have found absolute and saving truth in Jesus alone but they acknowledge that some of what other religions teach and practice is true and they seek points of contact for constructive dialogue.

– Terrance Tiessen

Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender: Love of God and Love of Neighbor, by David Augsburger, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006. 245pp, \$19.99.

Author David Augsburger begins his newest publication by explaining the impossibility of discovering the true meaning of spirituality. Spirituality has been used as a blanket term, one that covers many religious bases, thus creating a relativistic ethos that fits our modern society. In contemporary culture, spirituality becomes a term used often for discovering the self, for seeking a path

of greater self-awareness and understanding. Augsburg deviates from this fashionable definition into a historic, orthodox concept of spirituality.

For Augsburg, historic Christian spirituality is tripolar: it pulls us into a deeper sense of connection with ourselves, with God, and with our neighbor. It is a connection of personal transformation, experience of the divine, and solidarity with the neighbor (“neighbor” is defined as all people, including the enemy and persecutor). This view of spirituality is steeped in the Anabaptist tradition, one that Augsburg draws from repeatedly. Tripolar spirituality is manifested in seven traits, each of which Augsburg devotes an individual chapter to its explanation. The seven are: radical attachment, stubborn loyalty, tenacious serenity, habitual humility, resolute nonviolence, concrete service, and authentic witness.

Augsburger calls the reader into a sense of shocking discomfort. We can no longer perceive spirituality as something that nurtures our own individual selves and our own personal relationship to God. Spirituality of this kind pushes for a higher sense of commitment and a willingness to go into the places we routinely choose to forget. Augsburg understands the difficulty this kind of discipleship commands. Any individual or group that is seeking to deepen their understanding of spiritual growth will appreciate Augsburg’s words. He writes richly on a difficult topic with fervor and heart.

— Amy E. Avery

Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation, edited by James R. Krabill, Walter Sawatsky, and Charles E. Van Engen, New York: Orbis, 2006. xiv, 336pp., \$25.00.

These essays chronicle the life of mission historian, theologian, churchman, missionary, author, administrator, professor, bridgebuilder, and facilitator, Wilbert B. Shenk. The first chapter provides a brief biography of this servant of God, who is descended from Mennonites who settled in Oregon in the late 1800s.

Charles Van Engen introduces each of the book’s five sections. The first part highlights Wilbert Shenk’s contributions to church and mission history, and chronicles his special interest, in the history of the church in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Of special interest to this reviewer was the citation of *Readings in World Christian History*, edited by John W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk. John Lapp writes an insightful chapter on six learnings from a study of global Mennonite history.

Part Two examines issues in evangelical and ecumenical mission theology. Van Engen's writes an account of his cousin, David Muyskens's ministry at the First Reformed Church in New Brunswick and his present position as prayer coordinator for the Reformed Church in America. Van Engen states: "Mission theology needs to rediscover the church's fundamental calling: to help people know God in context."

Part Three explores trends in mission and ecclesiology. The spontaneous development of the Muria Chinese Church in Indonesia provides an interesting story as does the Anabaptist perspective on conversing with Muslims and Pablo Deiros' chapter on a Pneumatological-Spiritual Missiology.

This Volume tells the story of Holy Spirit God at work in our world. It provides an education into modern missions and the amazing life and influence of Wilbert Shenk.

— Robert J. Hoeksema

Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels, by Craig A. Evans, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006. 290pp.

Evans takes a hard look at some bad scholarship and misguided theories that appear in recent publications and other media regarding the historical Jesus. He intends that the book is written at a popular level for non-experts, defining terms used in biblical studies, and appending a glossary, and also a list of recommended books for readers who wish to study documents and scholarly literature that stand behind his arguments and conclusions.

Evans is particularly critical of the use of the gospels of Thomas, Peter, Mary, Secret Mark, and the Egerton Gospel and the writings of Josephus as historical sources. Some of the more prominent published scholars of the Jesus Seminar come under considerable criticism in the first five chapters. One of them is John Dominic Crossan of whom Evans writes: "Crossan's analysis of extracanonical sources...appears to be little more than subjective guesswork and special pleading" (58). Evans presents the viewpoint of other scholars for the late dating of *The Gospel of Thomas* (the middle of the second century at the earliest and more likely not before A.D. 175 or 180) and his conclusions that the four gospels of the New Testament are much earlier (possibly A.D. 60 to 95) and more reliable for the study of the historical Jesus. There are also appendices on Agrapha (free-floating sayings of Jesus) and the Gospel of Judas, a more recently published extra-canonical gospel.

Evans is not only concerned with the critique of modern scholarship. In the first chapter he also refers to misplaced faith such as “believing that the Scriptures must be inerrant according to rather strict idiosyncratic standards and that we must be able to harmonize the four Gospels [p21].” He makes note that such faith in rigid terms may well lead to the collapse of faith in the light of good critical scholarship.

In the final chapter, “Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up,” the author concludes “that the Gospels have fairly and accurately reported the essential elements of Jesus’ teaching, life, death and resurrection” (p.234). He emphasizes contemporary Jewish influence upon Jesus’ life and teachings, rather than Greco-Roman influence such as Crossan does in referring to Jesus as a peasant Jewish Cynic.

While it appears to this reviewer that Evans has at times been too short with scholars who have asked different questions and been led to differing honest conclusions, the book is highly recommended for its intended use and study.

— David W. Jurgens

The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions, by George Sumner, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. vi, 219 pp, \$26.00.

Sumner draws on the methodology of Alasdair MacIntyre to offer a “post-pluralist” or “postliberal” account of how Christians relate the claims of their own tradition to those of alien communities. He is aware that Christian theologies of religions vary considerably but he argues persuasively that the final primacy of Jesus Christ is the pattern common to all theologies that can properly be deemed Christian. Treating Christian theology as a tradition with its own distinctive narrative and practices (proclaiming, imagining and serving in neighborliness), he approaches the claims of other religions with the dual goals of integrity to the gospel and openness to other truths.

The theologies of religions put forward by Barth, Rahner, and Pannenberg are expertly described and assessed. Sumner concludes that each of these three very different approaches makes a positive contribution provided that their weaknesses are corrected by the rule of final primacy. This rule is then applied to an analysis of the way in which modern construals of the doctrine of the Trinity bear on the interpretation of the diversity of religious traditions.

Sumner demonstrates how the final primacy of Christ benefits Christian assessments of the claims of other religious traditions, by testing it out in three

cases: (1) the controversy over continuity and discontinuity which emerged at the World Council of Churches in Tambaram in 1938; (2) the context of Indian Christian theology; and (3) an analysis of theologies of contextualization with special reference to African Christian theology.

This is a very valuable work, both for the theological expertise with which it establishes a foundation for doing a Christian theology of religions and for the wisdom with which that method is used in specific situations facing the church today. It offers a splendid alternative to pluralist approaches, elucidating clearly where they are deficient and providing clear guidelines for constructive Christian engagement with other religions and their adherents.

– Terrance Tiessen

God in Public: Four Ways American Christianity and Public Life Relate, by Mark C. Toulouse, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. xxiii, 269pp, \$19.95.

Mark C. Toulouse offers a well documented historical context for reflecting on how American Christianity and public life have struggled to find healthy relationship. He addresses a fuzziness of “faith thought” and “governmental thought” by summarizing and setting definitions in a legal/historical/theological context. He notes how many assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors lead either toward establishment or toward the free exercise of religion. Then, offering four different ways American Christians act in public, Toulouse provides the historical context through an adept and insightful examination of the struggle of Christianity to find its role within the tensions of the Constitution.

The author defines the usual vocabulary of this discussion, terms like “church,” “state,” “pluralism,” and “secular.” He also offers terms that assist the reader in applying faith to public life i.e. “Iconic Faith,” “Priestly Faith,” “Public Christian,” and “Public Church.” He offers no simplistic solutions or formulas, but rather recognizes the tension represented in the refusal of the founders of our country to establish a state religion while insisting on “free exercise of religion.”

This book is a “must read” for all who seek to serve God and lead his people in a nation always in tension over public issues. Toulouse ferrets out the often contradictory actions of both the government and the church. He is not hesitant to identify “lightning rod” issues or to note doctrinal positions that have gone awry in gracelessness: “The church always has trouble dealing honestly and forthrightly with the notion (and the implication) of corporate sin” (p.91).

The danger of Toulouse's constructs of "faith types" is that little room allowed for the impact of nuances that are motivated by the Holy Spirit and that drive the kingdom of God. There is also a temptation to regard Jesus and the culture in which he was incarnated as being "primitive" in contrast to the sophistication and complexity of present culture. However, Toulouse's heart bleeds with grace for the victims of less than thoughtful "faith driven" actions: "The gospel . . . is the promise that God loves each and every human being and creation and (it is) the command that justice be done for each and every human being and in relation to creation.(p. 138).

– Pete Van Elderen

Growing Healthy Asian American Churches, edited by Peter Cha, S. Steve Kang, and Helen Lee, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006. 221pp, \$ 16.00.

While the gravity of gravity of Christendom shifts away from the North Atlantic world, Asian immigrant congregations in the USA are growing more vibrant and numerous. Peter Cha, Steve Kang, and Helen Lee realize the need to hear the Spirit speak for, and from, the experiences of the Asian American congregations. This small but insightful volume draws its resources from existing Asian American churches and provides insights on how to grow healthy Asian American congregations. It is a result of a three-year-long "communal" reflection and participant research by Asian American church leaders.

The first two chapters define and describe grace and truth as the ethos that should guide the growth of an Asian American church. The third and fourth chapters propose various models and paradigms of healthy leadership. The fifth chapter maps the route for change among the congregations; the sixth highlights the need for hospitality and evangelism (outreach). An analysis of the relationships between the generations as well as between genders features the following two chapters with an emphasis on partnership and interdependency. The ninth chapter highlights the ministry of compassion and justice as part of the Church's mission.

The editors, with the support from the Catalyst Leadership Centre, integrate the experiences of Asian American leaders belonging to different confessional backgrounds. The churches under the study include diverse Protestant traditions including Baptists, Presbyterians, and Holiness churches. They represent various East Asian ethnic groups: Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. Unfortunately, the churches belonging to the Orthodox and Catholic traditions and the congregations with East and Southeast Asian immigrants are underrepresented.

The authors are innovative in using the image of a household to describe a church. They draw on the cultural resources of their Asian roots to enrich the self-understanding of their churches. As the title suggests, they also use the horticultural images for the churches with words like cultivating and growing.

I commend the editors, the writers and the Catalyst Forum participants for their contribution to the Asian American churches. This book is a useful tool to the ministers, seminarians and church leaders who serve the Church in the North Atlantic world. It also provides rich resources for theologians working in the fields of ecclesiology and Asian American theology.

—James Elisha Taneti

John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian; The Shape of His Writings and Thought, by Randall C. Zachman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. 277pp. \$24.99

Many people may assume that all Calvin scholars are Calvinists, i.e., that they belong to a Presbyterian or Reformed denomination and adhere to one of the Reformed confessions. That may have been the case 75 years ago, but now the Calvin fraternity consists of people representing an ecumenical spectrum. For example, one of the leading Calvin scholars in the world, Alexandre Ganoczy, of Hungarian background who taught theology in Germany, is Roman Catholic, as is Jill Raitt, a former president of the Calvin Studies Society in North America. The author of this book, Randall Zachman, is another case in point. He is Episcopalian and is a professor of Reformation studies at the University of Notre Dame. He is also coming to be recognized as one of the leading Calvin scholars in the United States.

His doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago Divinity School was published as *The Assurance of Faith, Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (1993). Since then he has been publishing scholarly essays on Calvin in various journals and books. Many of these are collected together in this volume. All of them fall under one of the three themes of the book: Calvin as teacher, pastor, and theologian. Zachman, combines the first two themes in Part 1 and begins with a brief but fresh chapter on the life and work of Calvin and then compares Calvin and Melancthon on the office of teacher. Three chapters deal with Calvin's handling of scripture, including how he preached on Ephesians, and one with Calvin's catechisms.

Part 2, "Calvin as Theologian," contains chapters that deal with motifs that represent Zachman's special contributions to Calvin studies: "Image and Word in the Theology of Luther and Calvin; Manifestation and Proclamation in

Calvin's Theology;" Calvin as analogical theologian; "The Universe as the Living Image of God;" and "Jesus Christ as the Living Image of God." As these titles suggest, Zachman is particularly interested in the role images and analogy play in Calvin's theology, notions that have not received much attention before.

Since Calvin is popularly regarded as a theologian, two other motifs of Zachman's merits special notion, viz., that the goal of good theology is not simply correct belief but an informed piety; and also that we know God not only by his revelation in Scripture but also "by beholding and contemplating the self-manifestation of God in the universe."

This volume is full of fresh insights and deserves a wide readership. The style is clear, which makes this fine study accessible not only to Calvin scholars but also to anyone interested in good theology.

—I. John Hesselink

Kingdom, Office, and Church: A Study of A.A. van Ruler's Doctrine of Ecclesiastical Office, by Allan J. Janssen, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. xvi, 319pp, \$35.00.

Few books on the practice of ministry in the modern world show as much promise as this one for effective witness to the faith. In his exposition of the theology of the Dutch theologian, Professor A. A. Van Ruler, Allan Janssen takes the position that the three offices in the Reformed tradition—minister, elder, and deacon—exist not only in the church, but primarily in the kingdom of God well beyond the walls of the church. "Used by God and set within the kingdom, the offices represent the Messiah, whose business is the kingdom and the Spirit, who is abroad in the world of society, culture, and politics as well as community, marriage, and family" (182).

According to Van Ruler, the offices do not arise out of the ministry of the priesthood of believers or the life of the congregation. Rather the minister is called by God to proclaim to the church and in the world the message of salvation. This message can come only from God; it does not spring forth from human experience. The elder is sent out to represent Christ in the course of human life, in visiting people in their homes (*huisbezoek*), and to engage them in their places of work and play. The deacon "extends the concerns of God's kingdom into the ordinary world" with a ministry of compassion, love and justice (234).

The ministry of the offices takes place week by week in the life of the congregation and the congregation becomes the "sounding board," that

magnifies the Word preached to rippling out into the surrounding community (223). The goal is not only evangelism for the justification of sinners, but especially the sanctification (*kerstening*) of the world and the reconciliation of all things to God.

Janssen shows both how Van Ruler's doctrine of ecclesiastical office gives depth to pastoral practice and also makes a Reformed contribution to ecumenical dialogue within the wide framework of the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran-Reformed "Leuenberg Agreement" of 1973, and the denominational "Formula of Agreement" entered into by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the Reformed Church in America in 1997.

This is a very practical book that weds theological discussion to pastoral practice. It is the best exposition in English of the theology of Van Ruler. It is not easy reading, but careful reflection on each of the chapters will pay rich dividends in encouraging those called to service in the offices and the congregation to fulfill their calling in the kingdom of God.

— Eugene Heideman

Lesslie Newbigin. Missionary Theologian: A Reader, introduced and compiled by Paul Weston, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. x, 277pp, \$16.00 (paper).

Paul Weston accomplishes his aim of "introducing the thinking of Lesslie Newbigin to a larger audience" with considerable ease and tact. The excerpts span Newbigin's entire missionary-theological career from 1936 to 1998, just before his death. With short introductions, Weston lays out the background of each extract and identifies its location in the theological journey of Newbigin. He also traces the formative influences on Newbigin's thought. But, primarily, he allows the reader to hear Newbigin explain things in his own words.

The extracts in the volume deal with a wide range of topics most dear to Newbigin, such as missiology, ecclesiology, the Trinity, public theology, and theology of religions. For the sake of clarity, he divides the book into two parts; while the first part deals with the theological foundations of Newbigin's thought, another defines Newbigin's take on various themes such as the Church, the Gospel, the "secularized" West, and public theology.

Weston also provides the reader not only with suggestions for further reading and research but also with a detailed bibliography of Newbigin's writings. This book is a must read for any missionary, church leader, theologian or lay person

committed to the missionary calling of the Church. Seminaries and congregations, both ecumenical and evangelical, would find the book to be a very useful textbook in teaching Christian mission in their own contexts.

—James Elisha Taneti

The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, by Simon J. Gathercole, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. xi, 344pp, \$32.00 (paper).

Given the current consensus of New Testament scholars, the main point of this book will be controversial: the preexistence of Christ can be found in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as well as in John and in Paul (1). In academic circles, it has become a dogma that the Synoptics present Jesus as a prophet or envoy of God, and that “high Christology” developed later, particularly in John. This critical consensus is reinforced by the fact that many theologians read Johannine theology back into the Synoptics. What is needed is a rigorous study that can demonstrate the idea in the language of the Synoptics themselves.

Gathercole makes his case in four cumulative stages. First he shows that the preexistence of Christ was widely believed in prior to the composition of the Gospels, especially in the letters of Paul. It is likely that the Evangelists were familiar with the idea, particularly since two of them, Mark and Luke, were closely associated with Paul (23, 42). To supplement this part of his case, the author gathers evidence that the Synoptics viewed Jesus in exalted, heavenly terms. Much of this evidence would be acceptable to the opposition view that the Synoptic Jesus is merely a prophet or apocalyptic seer. Gathercole argues that the status of Jesus in the Synoptics transcends the limits of prophethood. It includes his esoteric knowledge of divine election, his ability to overrule Satan’s attacks on the disciples, supernatural recognition of his heavenly identity (not just during his prophetic utterances), the prerogative of determining the elect and sending out prophets, characteristically Yahwistic motifs like calming storms and walking on the sea, the use of his name in the place of the name of Yahweh, the right to be worshipped, and a presence that transcends space and time (51-78). Much of this material has been noted in various articles and commentaries, but Gathercole synthesizes and systematically evaluates it all.

In Part Two, Gathercole gives a detailed explanation of the “I have come” and “Have you come?” sayings in the Synoptics. The closest parallels are found in the statements angels make about their purpose in visiting earth (e.g., Dan. 9:22; 10:14; 11:2). Gathercole insists this does not make Jesus an angel. In fact, similar statements are made by the Lord God of Israel (e.g., Exod. 3:8; Ezek. 34:10-16).

These sayings provide strong evidence for Jesus' actual preexistence (not just "ideal preexistence"), particularly when combined with features from Part One like supernatural recognition of his heavenly identity (e.g., Mark 1:24) or with the stated purpose of proclamation (e.g., Mark 1:38). Gathercole does all this while eschewing the common appeal to Synoptic texts that appear to identify Jesus with divine Wisdom (193-210). His consistent denial of an intentional Wisdom Christology in the Synoptics indicates that he is not simply trying to muster all the support he can for a pre-conceived theological position.

In Part Three, the author explores various titles like Messiah and Son of God to show that these were commonly associated with the idea of preexistence, particularly in the Septuagint and the Similitudes of Enoch. He concludes, however, that there is no special thematization of preexistence in the Synoptics, and nothing is said about Christ's participating in the work of creation. For that we have to turn to the (chronologically later) Gospel of John (295-6).

Considering the fact that this is a technical monograph, written by a New Testament scholar, this book is clearly written and easily read by anyone with a college or seminary-level background in New Testament studies. Gathercole's method is strictly phenomenological. He sticks to the texts as written, and does not get into questions of their literary sources (e.g., Q, the sayings source) or their presuppositions. But how can we be sure of the exegesis (this or any other) unless an effort is made to address the conceptual issues that it raises. How did the Evangelists conceptualize the presence of Christ in the history of Israel? Why did they portray the messianic character of Jesus in such sharply contrasting ways: both son of David and divine Son from on high (240); both YHWH/Lord and one who is enthroned by YHWH (244-5)? Without answers to such basic questions, we are forced either to doubt the coherence of any of the Evangelists or to doubt Gathercole's exegesis. My point is not to challenge Gathercole's exegetical work, but to encourage further study of the conceptual world of the Synoptic Gospels.

– Christopher B. Kaiser

Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation, by Herman Bavinck, translated by John Vriendand and edited by John Bolt, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. 697pp, \$49.99.

We are indebted to the Dutch Reformed Translation Society for making available in English the four-volume set of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. Bavinck was the successor to Abraham Kuyper as professor of systematic theology at the Free University in Amsterdam. His broad scholarship, Reformed piety, and

irenic spirit shine through every chapter of this second volume that treats the theological loci of God and creation. The original Dutch was completed in a second edition of 1911 and was only slightly modified in the fourth edition of 1928. When the third and fourth volumes become available in English translation in the near future, American theologians will finally have available this classic work in Reformed systematic theology that was written in the same historical period as those produced by Charles Hodge, William G. T. Shedd, and Augustus Strong. As such, this translation is particularly valuable because it makes available the insights of the outstanding Dutch theologian of his day.

Pastors and theologians who have been shaped by reading more recent theologians will discover that Bavinck has much to offer. Not only does he provide clear definition of the issues, but in interacting with the theology and social currents of his day he gives us a model of how to deal with those abiding issues today.

Those who turn to Bavinck's first volume are likely to find him to be especially helpful in matters of epistemology and the inspiration and authority of scripture. In this second volume, his exposition of the names and attributes of God is spiritually warm and intellectually satisfying. His discussion of the doctrine of creation and the fall remains contemporary in his careful dialogue with philosophy of Hegel and Schelling and the theology of Schleiermacher. In our time when many are fascinated by Asian religions, New Age, and Gnostic philosophies, Bavinck's exposition of the nature of human destiny, predestination, and providence is helpful in clarifying the issues and reminding us of the strength of the Christian tradition as formulated in the great creeds of the church.

The Dutch Reformed Translation Society and Baker Academic Books are to be congratulated not only for this outstanding translation of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*, but also for making available such an attractively produced hard cover book at such a modest price. I recommend that all four volumes be purchased, read, underlined, and digested; the study of them is an edifying and enlightening theological journey.

—Eugene Heideman

Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul, by Kevin J. Corcoran, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 152pp, \$18.99.

When a believer dies, their soul goes to be with Christ in heaven until the resurrection when the believer's soul is reunited with its body. This is the dominant and historical view in Christian theology, but is this view dated by the

ancient Greek philosophy from which it materialized? Kevin Corcoran argues that this soul-body dualism is neither biblical nor philosophically viable. Instead, he posits a “constitution view” of persons and defends this view against the alternative views as equally (if not exceedingly) compatible with the Christian worldview.

Human bodies are “like storms” (p.72). Through the functions of ingestion, digestion, and expulsion, bodies are in a constant process of picking up new material and leaving other material so that the bodies we have currently are not made of the same material as our bodies had ten years ago. Corcoran believes human persons are entirely material or physical and do not include an immaterial soul. People are identified or “constituted” by their bodies, but they are not identical with their bodies. When believer’s body dies, the *person* continues to live. Corcoran argues that this is possible because persons are first person states of consciousness that persist through the causal relationships that lead one set of material states into other sets over time. He admits that materialist views of persons often have difficulty accommodating the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection. Yet he argues that the constitution view, although materialist, can accommodate the bodily resurrection as well as the soul-body view can.

The book is intended for students of theology and philosophy and for the interested layperson. If you are inquisitive about what it means to be a human being, this is the book for you.

— Aaron Vriesman

Talking With Christians, Musings of a Jewish Theologian, by David Novak, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. 269pp, \$25.00.

Novak is a professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. He was a student of Abraham Joshua Heschel.

This book is not a casual read. Neither is it for the casual Christian. It is a collection of fifteen previously published articles and/or lectures relating to Christianity from a Jewish perspective. In it Novak seeks to engage Christians in a dialogue on a philosophical rather than a theological basis regarding our common roots in the Hebrew Bible and the traditions and practices of the Second Temple period. Novak’s basic assumption is that modern Rabbinic Judaism and Orthodox Christianity share a common belief that our knowledge of God is based on revelation rather than logic. Accordingly, Judaism and Christianity

provide the only historical locations for hearing the commandments of the Lord God of Israel and responding to them in the context of a covenanted community.

For Reformed Christians, this book holds particular interest as the result of Novak's discussions in two articles relating to the impact of Karl Barth on both Christian and Jewish thinking. Another article is devoted to a discussion of the relationship between theology and philosophy. Two of the recurring themes that I found to be of interest are Novak's thoughts on the Jewish perception of election and of general and special revelation.

As we enter the Post-Christian era, Novak points out the Christians have much to learn from the Jewish experience of living and thriving in a European world that was dominated by a Christianity and was often hostile to Judaism. He also says the Jews have much to learn from Christians about the use of political power, especially as it relates to the government of the modern state of Israel. Further, because of our shared belief in the rule of God rather than the rule of human law, serious Jews and serious Christians need to respond more effectively to the ongoing and deepening moral crisis in the West.

– Tom Merchant

The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ in Dialogue with the Religions, edited by Massimo Serretti (translated by Teresa Talavera and David C. Schindler), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. xi, 163pp, \$22.00.

The seven authors in this collection participate in an International Research Project in Christology convened at the Pontifical Lateran University (Rome). This first phase of their research aims "to exhibit thematically the theoretical presuppositions of the pluralistic theology of religions" (vii). The essays assess "whether, and to what extent, the theories of knowledge on which this theology bases its account of religion and the religions are adequate" (vii). Each author critiques the pluralistic ideology and demonstrates, by contrast, how the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ lead us to a more faithful representation of Christianity and a more adequate starting point for dialogue with members of other religions.

Angelo Cardinal Scola's ontological anthropology unites absoluteness and historicity, necessity and freedom in a manner that demonstrates the unity between revelation and salvation and resists the slide into relativism. The unity in multiplicity that is inherent in the Christological and Trinitarian understanding of Christian faith is the starting point from which Walter Cardinal Kasper develops a theology of religions which is tolerant and respectful but also

dialogical and diaconal in relation to other religions.

Gerhard Ludwig Müller reviews the ideological precedents appropriated by contemporary pluralist theology, identifies serious contradictions within that post-Christian approach, and proposes a more adequate basis of a theology of divine revelation and human religions. Following an analysis of three major epistemologies of truth and an exposition of problematic Christological approaches to truth, Marcello Bordoni puts forward an epistemology based on Christ as the personal event of truth. Massimo Serretti reviews theologies of religious pluralism and argues that they end up diminishing rather than enhancing plurality because they weaken both creaturely and divine unity. The pluralistic theology of Perry Schmidt-Leukel is analyzed by Michael Schulz who argues that Aquinas offered a much better approach through analogical knowledge of the transcendent. Finally, Karl-Heinze Menke reviews recent efforts to describe how an historical fact (notably, the incarnation of Jesus) can have universal significance.

This is challenging reading but it will be helpful to those who seek both incisive critique of relativistic pluralist theologies of religion and a well developed epistemology for a more faithful Christian approach. The essays clearly work within the framework of Roman Catholic theology but they make a broader contribution to this important theological conversation.

— Terrance Tiessen

The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology, by Roger E. Olson, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004. xi, 328pp, \$39.95.

This is a fine guide to evangelical (systematic) theology: “that form of mostly Protestant Christian reflection on God and salvation (etc.) that is guided by the ultimate authority of Scripture, acknowledges that God is supremely revealed in Jesus Christ, and includes a strong focus on personal salvation by repentance and faith” (9). The book begins with an over sixty-page “story” of evangelicalism (from the 18th century), followed by four other main sections, each arranged alphabetically: seventeen movements and organizations, sixteen theologians (all white males; a “reality” [2]), sixty-five “traditional” doctrines, and fourteen issues. Each entry has a brief bibliography. The intended readership is “students, pastors, teachers, and all other interested persons” (xi); the language is usually plain and sometimes colloquial.

Roger Olson is a professor at Baylor University and an avowedly “post-conservative evangelical” and Arminian Baptist, but he aims to keep his own

“theological biases to a minimum” (xi). He largely succeeds, by providing accurate descriptions, balanced by fair critiques and alternate evangelical viewpoints (and often rejoinders to these), in the entries in the last four sections. He nevertheless clearly favors “post-conservative evangelicalism” over the “conservative evangelicalism” that was once called “new evangelicalism,” the latter having become stagnant. Olson maintains that, just as the neo-evangelicals rightly broke out of their fundamentalist cocoon a half century ago, so now post-conservative evangelicals are creatively challenging calcified conservative evangelicalism. However, I wonder if the theological changes being contemplated today are not larger than those of 1950.

According to Olson, the progressive forces of post-fundamentalist “evangelicalism” were the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), Evangelical Theological Society (1949), *Christianity Today* (1956), together with Billy Graham, Carl Henry (editor of *CT*), E.J. Carnell, and Bernard Ramm. I myself was caught up in the ferment of this “new evangelicalism,” having heard Ramm lecture at college, been at Fuller in the mid-50s absorbing Henry and Carnell, and attended a Graham Rose Bowl rally.

The progressive forces today, Olson believes, are the post-conservative evangelicals, including Donald Bloesch (who taught at the Presbyterian Dubuque Theological Seminary and represents a “generous orthodoxy”), Clark Pinnock (another Arminian Baptist), and Stanley Grenz (Olson’s collaborator on two books). Among other things, Pinnock advocates open theism, salvation of the unevangelized, limited inerrancy, and postmodernism.

Olson not only hopes for greater acceptance of an enlightened evangelical theology in mainline denominations (like the Presbyterians), but he explicitly desires greater acceptance of Arminians in the evangelical tent, which he and others believe has been dominated by Calvinists and the “rationalist” theology of Old Princeton (Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield), followed by many Baptists (e.g., Henry and Carnell). Olson tacitly adopts the common Barthian antithesis between Calvin and Calvinist “scholasticism,” apparently unaware of (or unreceptive to) of Richard Muller’s challenge to that hypothesis. Olson repudiates obscurantist and separatist fundamentalism and the fundamentalist remnants in conservative evangelicalism, e.g., strict inerrancy.

This handbook mostly concerns the Anglo-American evangelicalism of Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Pentecostals, both within and without the mainline denominations. Almost nothing is said about Lutherans, the RCA, or the CRC, perhaps because they fall outside Olson’s definition of evangelical. Abraham Kuyper’s school of thought is occasionally mentioned.

The book would be much shorter were the five main sections (however useful that arrangement may be) combined, to avoid excessive repetition; virtually the same descriptions recur in each section on major writers like Pinnock and Henry. Only a few minor errors are present. Nevertheless, this is a reference work well worth owning. It provides an excellent window on evangelicalism, showing that it is neither monolithic nor immutable. Olson will provide authoritative guidance for years to come.

– Earl Wm. Kennedy

Worship and the Religious Affections: Shaping the Christian Life, Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. 184pp., \$24.95.

The schism between the importance of “scholastic” and “visceral” components of religious practice has caused a deep tension in the life of the covenant community. Many attempts have been made to determine which side has preeminence in the arena of religious practice. Hotz and Mathews attempt to provide a plurality of reason and heart in worship practice in order to narrow the chasm.

Using the religious affections, “the enduring features of our identity” as the shaping guide for worship practice, Hotz and Mathews have identified the “missing links” for a clearer explanation of Christian worship practices. These enduring features are: the logic of affections, language generation, reordering of our attention towards God and others, and the image bearing of humanity and its moral agency. Missing links are also established in the sacrament of baptism with the reconception of the nature of power as well as in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper where we enter into communion with God in Christ. We encounter the presence of God not in our memories, but in the divine presence of God here and now.

It is my hope that in future writings Hotz and Mathews will continue to build upon these “missing links” doing so will strengthen the covenant community in its search of rediscovering worship in religious practice. I recommend this book as a theological supplemental worship practice text.

– Mary Climer