



The Bulletin

of the Institute for Reformed Theology

— Dedicated to supporting theological reflection and conversation that enhance the ministry of the church —

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Christ at the Center: The Legacy of the Reformed Tradition

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Editor's note: We are pleased to present this essay as the first of an occasional series of essays exploring the Reformed tradition from the point of view of theologians outside the tradition. The series is entitled "Ecumenical Partners."

When I was preparing for ministry as a Catholic priest in the late 1970s, one of the professors in our theology program announced that he would be teaching a course in "Calvin's Sacramental Theology." At the time I remember thinking, "What could Calvin possibly have to say to Catholics about the sacraments?" Needless to say, I didn't take the course. Years later, as luck would have it, I became a serious student of Calvin's thought. The more I learned about Calvin, the more I grew in appreciation of him, and the more embarrassed I was by the ignorance and arrogance of my earlier judgment. I came to realize that if I had been smart, I would have taken that course.

In this essay, I will reflect on the significance of the Reformed Tradition for the Christian church, focusing mainly on the contributions of John Calvin. I speak as an outsider to the tradition, but also as an admirer. In our own day, thank God, we have been able to build bridges of understanding where there were once only walls of hatred and division. This is not to say that the walls have all come tumbling down. As recently as a few years ago, the Roman Catholic church released a statement, *Dominus Iesus*, that in my view represented a major step backwards in ecumenical and interfaith relations.¹ This only makes it more important for a Catholic to engage in this kind of reflection.

I once had the opportunity to speak to a class at the London Bible College about what I liked and disliked about Calvin. It was interesting to discover that everything I had to say about Calvin corresponded to parallel things that I liked or disliked in Roman Catholicism. For

(continued on page 3)

In this issue:

CHRIST AT THE CENTER: THE LEGACY OF THE REFORMED TRADITION

By Dennis Tamburello Page 1

IRT COLLOQUIES Page 2

REFORMED THEOLOGY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN WORSHIP

By Edward Newberry Page 7

BOOK REVIEWS Page 9

The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology by Peter A. Lillback
Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations Beyond Tragedy by John C. McDowell

Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness by Clark H. Pinnock

Engaging in God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
Growing Toward Unity edited by Elisabeth Slaughter Hilke

Do No Harm: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility by Stephen G. Ray

God's Renaissance Man: Abraham Kuyper by James E. McGoldrick

Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning by Nicholas P. Wolterstorff

(continued on page 2)

IRT Colloquies

The Institute for Reformed Theology's 2003-2005 National Colloquy is entitled "The Church: Recent Theological, Sociological, and Practical Perspectives." This colloquy, led by Union-PSCE professors **Dawn DeVries**, John Newton Thomas Professor of Systematic Theology, and **Douglas F. Ottati**, M. E. Pemberton Professor of Theology, convened in September 2003, and will explore the nature and mission of the church through a close reading of resources in systematic theology, sociology of religion, and practical theology. Meeting in Richmond six times over two years, the colloquy participants are: **Mindy Douglas Adams**, Associate Pastor, University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, NC; **Thomas Are**, Pastor, Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS; **Fernando Cascante**, Assistant Professor of Christian Education, Union-PSCE; **Alex W. Evans**, Pastor, and **Ginger Evans**, Director of Christian Education, Blacksburg Presbyterian Church, Blacksburg, VA; **Bruce Lancaster**, Pastor, Salisbury Presbyterian Church, Richmond, VA; **Lewis S. Mudge**, Robert Leighton Stuart Professor of Theology, Emeritus, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA; **Edward B. Newberry**, Pastor, Memorial Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC; **Kimberly Rodrigue**, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Arlington, VA; **Carol L. Schnabl Schweitzer**, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care, Union-PSCE; **Laird J. Stuart**, Pastor, Calvary Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, CA; **Ernest T. Thompson**, First Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, NC; and Union-PSCE M.Div. students, **Grace Kim**, **Jennifer McGill**, **Jennifer Moran**, and **Cathie Stivers**.

Entitled "Christian Faith and Economic Life," the 2004 National Colloquy is led by **Mark Valeri**, E. T. Thompson Professor of Church History, Union-PSCE; and **Douglas Hicks**, Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies and Religion, Jepson School of Leadership Studies of the University of Richmond. Convening in January 2004, this colloquy brings together pastors, scholars, and business leaders to discuss contemporary moral dilemmas in capitalistic economies today; religious notions of calling and economic vocation; globalization and the issue of inequality; the market system as a moral construct and agent

Mission statement of the Institute for Reformed Theology

Our goal is to support theological reflection and conversation that enhance the ministry of the church. In particular, we hope to serve Union-PSCE, Reformed denominations, and the whole body of Christ by

- ≈ Engaging in theological conversation that is informed, committed, reasonable, and mutually respectful;
- ≈ Presenting this model among colloquy members, public audiences, and congregations;
- ≈ Addressing contemporary issues of faith by reflection on basic theological statements; and
- ≈ Providing a forum for pastors, theological students and scholars to inform each other's work.

In this issue:

(continued from page 1)

Worship: Reformed according to Scripture by Hughes Oliphant Old
Biblical Poetics Before Humanism and Reformation by Christopher Ocker
Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: A Historical and Practical Theology by John W. Riggs

IRT PUBLIC LECTURE Page 18

IRT AFFILIATE NEWS Page 19

of sociability; and the church as producer, consumer, and participant in the market. Participants include: **Robert D. Austin**, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA; **Harlan Beckley**, Director, Shepherd Program, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA; **Jane Fahey**, formerly pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, GA; **Christine Firer Hinze**, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI; **William C. Goettler**, First Presbyterian Church, New Haven, CT; **Eric S. Gregory**, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ; **Blythe McGarvie**, Leadership for International Finance, Williamsburg, VA; **Janet L. Parker**, Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL; **Rebecca Todd Peters**, Elon University, Elon, NC; **Shirley Roels**, Lilly Vocational Project, Grand Rapids, MI; **Rodney S. Sadler**, Union-PSCE Charlotte, Charlotte, NC; **Stanley H. Skreslet**, Union-PSCE, Richmond, VA; **Jeffrey B. Van Duzer**, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA; **Kent A. Van Til**, Brookfield, WI; and **Thomas W. Walker**, Palms Presbyterian Church, Jacksonville, FL. Union-PSCE M.Div. students **Dustin Batson** and **Teresa McRoberts**, as well as Ph.D. student **Enikő Ferenczy**, also participate.

In other news, two colloquies are in the planning stages. The first, led by **Louis Weeks**, Union-PSCE President and Professor of Historical Theology in the Walter W. Moore and the Charles E. S. Kraemer Presidential Chairs, and **Elizabeth M. Ayscue**, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Albemarle, NC, will explore Presbyterian practices. Union-PSCE professors **Katie Geneva Cannon**, Annie Scales Rogers Professor of Christian Ethics, and **Samuel K. Roberts**, Anne Borden and E. Hervev Evans Professor of Theology and Ethics, will lead a colloquy exploring race and the Reformed tradition that will convene in the Winter of 2006. This colloquy will meet in Charlotte, NC and will coincide with the 2006 Sprunts Lectures which will be sponsored with the Union-PSCE Alumni/ae Office.

IRT Affiliate News (continued from page 19)

H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is a research center specializing in John Calvin and Calvinism that opened in 1981 and is located at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

March 31, 2004: Dr. Laura Smit, assistant professor of religion at Calvin College, will be the Meeter Center's spring lecturer. Her topic will be "Calvinists' Sacramental Understanding."

For more information, call (616) 526-7081 or check their website: www.calvin.edu/meeter.

Christ at the Center: The Legacy of the Reformed Tradition *(continued from page 1)*

example, I liked Calvin's emphasis on piety, which he defined as "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of [God's] benefits induces."² This is the goal of knowledge of God—not to know God theoretically or intellectually, but to give glory and praise to God, whom Calvin described as the "fountain-

“ . . . the most common thread that I see running through the teachings of the Reformed tradition. . . is the centrality of Christ.”

head and source of every good.”³ I saw Calvin's focus on piety as a point of contact with my own tradition's approach to spirituality. Indeed, in recent times, scholars have begun to speak without embarrassment of a spirituality in Calvin.⁴

On the negative side, I critiqued Calvin for being too sure of himself on a lot of issues—precisely a criticism I would also lay at the door of the Catholic church at that time. In the sixteenth century, arrogance and pig-headedness were in ample supply, and Calvin's conviction about the absolute

rightness of his own views was no more (or less!) obnoxious than that of his Roman opponents.

In fairness to both sides, I should note that in those days truth tended to be seen as univocal—truth was “one,” so that if Geneva was right on something, Rome had to be wrong, and vice-versa. There was little appreciation of how truth could be multifaceted or perspectival. Today, in our age of ecumenical dialogue, it is easier to see how the Reformed and Catholic churches have each preserved certain emphases that can serve as a corrective to one another. This is not to say that *all* of our differences are simply a matter of perspective, but certainly some of them are.

The exercise of compiling a list of likes and dislikes about Calvin was a helpful reminder of how much our traditions have in common even in their differences. With this in mind, I offer the following reflections on the contributions of the Reformed Tradition to theology and to the life of the church.

THE GRACE OF CHRIST

Perhaps the most common thread that I see running through the teachings of the Reformed tradition, from Calvin's time to today, is the centrality of Christ. We see this in Calvin's own description of faith as engrafting us into Christ: “Christ, when he illumines us into faith by the power of his Spirit, at the same time so engrafts us into his body that we become partakers of every good.”⁵ We see it in Schleiermacher's relating everything in his dogmatics to the redemption accomplished by Jesus.⁶ And we see it in modern documents such as “Towards a Common Understanding of the Church,” the fruit of the second phase of Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue, which states: “We . . . confess together that Christ, established as mediator, achieves our reconciliation in all its dimensions: God reconciling humanity; human beings reconciled with each other; and humanity reconciled with God.”⁷

One of the foundations for this Christological accent in Reformed theology is surely Calvin's teaching on the twofold grace of Christ. This teaching is laid out with particular clarity in *Institutes* 3.16.1:

Do you wish . . . to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces. Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, he bestows both of them at the same time, the one never without the other. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.⁸

This articulation of the work of grace in human beings is one of the most significant contributions of Reformed theology to the church. It is debatable whether the scriptures themselves posit such a clear distinction between the graces of justification and sanctification. Thus, Roman Catholic theology traditionally considered justification to *includes* sanctification, i.e., the transformation of the believer. Calvin's formula-

tion preserved the Roman emphasis on the importance of works, but placed them completely under the rubric of sanctification, thus avoiding any danger of slipping into the language of works-righteousness. The Council of Trent was not receptive to such a formulation. Today it is easier to see that Calvin's conception of the twofold grace was a healthy corrective to a theology (and more important, a piety) that had sometimes veered into Pelagianism.

Anna Case-Winters has suggested that Calvin's doctrine of the twofold grace of Christ can make another distinctive contribution to contemporary dialogue on justification. Commenting on the 1999 Lutheran-Catholic Joint Statement on Justification, she notes that Lutheran theology has tended to emphasize the forgiveness of sins (justification), while Catholic theology has stressed the renewal of life (sanctification). Calvin's doctrine gives “more equally balanced attention” to both:

Calvin assumed that our justification will have real effects in our lives, that we will be regenerated; and that faith will necessarily issue in good works. Yet neither our faith nor our works are our own—which would be a cause for boasting—but rather they are, equally, gifts of God.

(continued on page 4)

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Christ at the Center: The Legacy of the Reformed Tradition *(continued from page 3)*

She suggests yet another point that could be a “distinctive contribution” of the Reformed tradition:

For Calvin . . . sanctification is not primarily about good works, but about “union with Christ.” We do not attain or even approach sinless perfection, but “with a wonderful communion, day by day, he (Christ) grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us” (*Inst.* 3.2.24).⁹

I would go further than this and point out that justification too is about union with Christ. Calvin explicitly makes this connection in his commentary on Galatians 2:20:

Christ lives in us in two ways. The one consists in His governing us by his Spirit and directing all our actions. The other is what He grants us by participation in His righteousness, that, since we can do nothing of ourselves, we are accepted in Him by God. The first relates to regeneration [sanctification], the second to the free acceptance of righteousness [justification].¹⁰

“Calvin has commonly been presented as a dogmatic theologian, with little attention given to his intense interest in Christian experience.”

Calvin’s teaching on union with Christ thus parallels his teaching on the twofold grace.

Calvin’s theology of union is a teaching that has often been neglected by the Reformed tradition. Calvin has commonly been presented as a dogmatic theologian, with little attention given to his intense interest in Christian experience. But union with Christ was one of his foremost concerns, and it appears in numerous contexts in his writings.¹¹ This is reinforced by his emphasis on piety, not theoretical knowledge of God, as the goal of theology. Nevertheless, as recently as eight years ago, several reviewers of my

published dissertation, *Union with Christ*, dismissed my study of Calvin’s spirituality as having nothing to do with the real Calvin.

As an outsider to the Reformed tradition, I must confess that it puzzles me how the obsession with the dogmatic Calvin has “died hard.” One of the strange ironies of Reformation thought is that it fell fairly quickly into the same trap to which it accused the Roman church of falling prey: a rigid dogmatism. One has only to review the sad history of Reformers fighting among themselves to confirm this. A particularly poignant example is the Eucharistic controversies of the sixteenth century, which have been very capably summarized and analyzed by Jill Raitt.¹² No doubt we are all familiar with the term “Protestant Scholasticism”—an oxymoron

that became a historical reality in both Lutheran and Reformed circles.

This is an area in which I, a committed Roman Catholic, would criticize Rome and Geneva alike. While dogmatic formulations can be helpful and even necessary, they also can reflect a tragic flaw in our religion. I am convinced that Christianity is more properly about orthopraxis than orthodoxy—a fancy way of saying that it is more about doing than talking or intellectualizing. Yet over the centuries, we have often tolerated breaches of morality and silence in the face of injustice far more than we have tolerated heterodox opinions. In this connection, I find it interesting that the word “doctrine” only appears about six times in the Bible, while words for “love” appear over five hundred times. This should be a reminder to all of us of where our priorities should lie.

Although I would not argue that Calvin himself had absolutely no tendency towards dogmatism, his focus on piety shows that his heart was in the right place. It should also be noted that Calvin saw himself not as a dogmatician, but as a biblical theologian.

SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

Another major contribution of Reformed theology has been Calvin’s teaching on the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Contrary to what many Catholics have supposed, it is not true that Protestants in general deny the “real presence.” In fact, in the Reformed-Roman Catholic joint statement on “The Presence of Christ in Church and World,” the dialogue commission stated: “We gratefully acknowledge that both traditions, Reformed and Roman Catholic, hold to the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.”¹³

Of course, there are some significant differences here. Calvin rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, believing that it was a wrongheaded way of understanding the Eucharist. In his mind, it made no sense to speak of Christ becoming attached to the elements of bread and wine. Rather, he believed that in receiving the Eucharist, the believer was drawn up into the life of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Calvin insisted that this communion was both spiritual and real.

Although I struggle with the teaching on transubstantiation, tied as it is to the archaic Aristotelian categories of substance and accident, as a Catholic I believe that in a real sense the bread and the wine do become “different” than they were before the consecration. But Calvin was absolutely right in stressing that what was most important in the theology of the Eucharist was not what happens to the bread and wine, but what happens to *us* who receive the Eucharist in faith.

All too often in Catholicism, Eucharistic piety has centered around adoration of the sacred species. This focus misses the crucial point that Calvin grasped: that *we* are the most important “tabernacles” where Christ dwells. The union with Christ that we experience in the Eucharist should have a transformative effect in our lives. This was hardly a new idea in the sixteenth century. Several centuries before Calvin, John Chrysostom described Christians who came to receive at the Lord’s table, yet would not give food or show

Christ at the Center: The Legacy of the Reformed Tradition

mercy to their brothers and sisters who were poor, as missing the point of the Eucharist.¹⁵ Calvin himself followed Augustine in referring to the Eucharist as “the bond of love” that inspires compassion and care for one another.¹⁶ Thus, Calvin can be seen as an important resource in current discussions of the Eucharist and social justice.

It seems to me that Calvin’s rich theology of the Eucharist should have led historically to the Lord’s Supper having a more prominent and more frequent place in Reformed worship. Calvin himself says in the *Institutes* that

[the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper] was not ordained to be received only once a year Rather, it was ordained to be frequently used among all Christians in order that they might frequently return in memory to Christ’s Passion, by such remembrance to sustain and strengthen their faith, and urge themselves to sing thanksgiving to God and to proclaim his goodness; finally, by it to nourish mutual love, and among themselves give witness to this love, and discern its bond in the unity of Christ’s body.¹⁷

Calvin’s argument here is directed against the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), which required that Catholics receive communion at least once a year. Note that Calvin is misrepresenting the Council when he says that it decreed that communion be received *only* once a year. This was the minimum, not the maximum requirement.

Be that as it may, Calvin’s words can be turned against his own tradition, inasmuch as many Reformed churches celebrate the Lord’s Supper somewhat infrequently. Calvin goes on to say in the *Institutes* that “the Lord’s Table should have been spread *at least once a week* for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually.”¹⁸

This is one area where I frankly think Catholicism has been more on target with its practice, at least until recently. The tradition of celebrating Eucharist on a weekly basis is an ancient one that the Catholic church has consistently upheld as important. On this point, Calvin seems to be in agreement. Why, then, did the Lord’s Supper come to be neglected in Reformed practice? Is it possible that the sacrament was celebrated less frequently partly as an overreaction against the perceived shortcomings of the Catholic Mass? The good news is, there does seem to be some positive movement on this question in recent Reformed thinking. A good example would be the new book by Keith A. Mathison, *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper* (Presbyterian & Reformed Press, 2002), which raises many of the issues touched on above.

Unfortunately, the Catholic Church is currently in no position to gloat over the priority it gives to the Eucharist. While proclaiming the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian life, our institutional leadership has allowed an intolerable situation to

develop, whereby many Catholics are deprived of weekly Eucharist because of narrow and outdated requirements for priestly ordination. Thus, in our own day, some Catholics end up having access to the Lord’s Supper even less frequently than their Reformed sisters and brothers. Clearly, we Catholics have as much work to do in this area as the Reformed.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Whenever Calvin talked about Christ, mention of the Holy Spirit was not far behind. This brings us to another contribution of Reformed theology: its pneumatology. Calvin’s awareness of the role of the Holy Spirit pervaded every aspect of his thought. He defined faith, for example, as “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹ Similarly, he spoke of the Holy Spirit bringing us through faith to union with Christ,²⁰ and of the Holy Spirit as effecting the bond we experience with Christ in the Lord’s Supper.²¹ Following Calvin’s lead, Schleiermacher theorized that “every regenerate person partakes of the Holy Spirit, so that there is no living fellowship with Christ without an indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and vice versa.”²²

This focus on the Spirit continues to pervade Reformed thought today. For example, in “The Presence of Christ in Church and World,” Reformed and Catholic theologians proclaimed:

It is through the Spirit that Christ is at work in creation and redemption. As the presence in the world of the risen Lord, the Spirit affirms and manifests the resurrection and effects the new creation. Christ who is Lord of all and active in creation points to God the Father who, in the Spirit, leads and guides history where there is no unplanned development.²³

In our own day, much attention has been given to the Spirit’s role in salvation and in the church. But historically, pneumatology has often taken a back seat to christology. The Reformed tradition’s emphasis on the Spirit has been a good corrective to this tendency. How much this emphasis has filtered into the everyday life of Reformed Christians is a question that I am not qualified to answer.

RELIGION AS THANKFULNESS

I would not want to leave the impression that the Reformed tradition has only contributed to our understanding of God. It has also enriched the church’s understanding of the Christian life in myriad ways. In closing, I would like to focus on a key element of piety that is rooted in the thought of John Calvin: the notion of thankfulness.

(continued on page 6)

“ . . . what was most important in the theology of the Eucharist was not what happens to the bread and wine, but what happens to us who receive the Eucharist in faith.”

Christ at the Center: The Legacy of the Reformed Tradition *(continued from page 5)*

We have mentioned that Calvin defines God as the fountain-head of all goodness. For Calvin, the only proper response to God's gifts of creation and redemption is a life filled with gratitude, giving thanks and praise to God. Calvin expresses this point with particular poignancy in his famous "Reply to Sadolet," where he argues that preoccupation with one's own salvation is theologically unsound:

It is not very sound theology to confine a man's thoughts so much to himself, and not to set before him as the prime motive of his existence zeal to show forth the glory of God . . . I therefore believe that there is no man imbued with true piety, who will not regard as in poor taste that long and detailed exhortation to a zeal for heavenly life, which occupies a man entirely concerned with himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God.²⁴

This point is echoed in the *Institutes'* definition of piety as "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of [God's] benefits induces."²⁵

It is not hard to see how religion can degenerate into self-interest or fear. Even the most ardent believer in justification by grace through faith can fall into the trap of becoming preoccupied with his or her salvation. Calvin was accused of presumption for daring to assert that believers could have certitude of salvation; but he thought it obvious that if salvation is in fact God's gift, we should not worry about earning it. Rather, we should simply trust in God's promises and live our lives in thankful praise and love of God, expressing that gratitude in our love of neighbor.²⁶ This is perhaps the most practical contribution of the Reformed tradition to the everyday life of Christian believers.

ENDNOTES:

¹ See Dennis E. Tamburello, "Dominus Iesus: A Stumbling Block to Reformed-Catholic Dialogue?" in *Concord Makes Strength: Essays in Reformed Ecumenism*, ed. John W. Coakley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), pp. 77-87.

² *Institutes* 1.2.1. Translations of the *Institutes* are taken from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20 and 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

³ *Institutes* 1.2.2.

⁴ For example, a Calvin volume was recently added to Paulist Press's *Classics of Western Spirituality* series: Elsie Anne McKee, ed., *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety* (New York: Paulist, 2002).

⁵ *Institutes* 3.2.25.

⁶ B. A. Gerrish offers a superb introduction to Schleiermacher's Christology in *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), especially pp. 35-50. Gerrish later nuances this by pointing out that strictly speaking, Schleiermacher's theology is not Christo-centric but Christo-morphic. "Christology . . . is not the absolute center of the

system, but the system as a whole is shaped or formed by Christology" (p. 53). In this he follows Richard R. Niebuhr in *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 212.

⁷ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," in *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982-1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 796.

⁸ *Institutes* 3.16.1.

⁹ Anna Case-Winters, "Joint Declaration on Justification: Reformed Comments," in *Concord Makes Strength*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁰ David and Thomas Torrance, eds., *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 11, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 43. For a more complete treatment of this topic, see my *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), pp. 86-87, 100-101.

¹¹ See *Union with Christ*, especially pp. 84-101, and the appendix on pp. 111-113.

¹² See her book, *The Colloquy of Montbéliard: Religion and Politics in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). In describing this controversy between Lutherans and Calvinists, Raitt points out that it did not take long for positions to become "firmly entrenched" (p. 74). In fairness, she also notes that during the colloquy, Theodore Beza and his Reformed colleagues sought reconciliation and a stress on what was held in common (see pp. 99, 122).

¹³ "The Presence of Christ in Church and World," in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), p. 456.

¹⁴ See especially *Institutes* 4.17.16 and 4.17.33.

¹⁵ See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), par. 1397.

¹⁶ *Institutes* 4.17.38.

¹⁷ *Institutes* 4.17.44.

¹⁸ *Institutes* 4.17.46. Emphasis added.

¹⁹ *Institutes* 3.2.7.

²⁰ *Institutes* 3.1.3.

²¹ *Institutes* 4.17.33.

²² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 574.

²³ "Presence of Christ in Church and World," p. 445.

²⁴ J. K. S. Reid, ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 228.

²⁵ *Institutes* 1.2.1.

²⁶ Calvin makes this point with particular clarity in his commentary on Galatians 5:14, where he describes love of neighbor as proof of our love of God. *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 11, pp. 100-101. See also B. A. Gerrish's excellent study, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

Reformed Theology and African American Presbyterian Worship

By Edward B. Newberry

April of 2003 marked the centennial anniversary of the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dr. William Edward Burghardt DuBois, a 35-year-old scholar, who was the first African American to earn the Ph.D. from Harvard University, wrote this small but very influential book. Three years into the 20th century DuBois introduced a dilemma in the foreword: "Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century...for the problem of the 20th century will be the problem of the color line."¹ That is the most famous statement of this seminal book of essays. The essay subtitled "Fifty Years After" refers to the time since President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, which freed African slaves in northern-conquered territory in the Civil War. One other observation in that book was DuBois's description of living as a black person in America. DuBois wrote: "One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts; two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body."² One had to exist in two distinct worlds: one black because of race and identity; one white because of the wider culture, economic, political, educational and social systems in America.

In a sense, that is where African American Presbyterian pastors and congregations find themselves. We are, by the decree of God, blessed with the identity of being black, with all that this portends regarding heritage and history, personality and perspective. Yet we are, by decision of faith, blessed with the covenant relationship of a church that is predominately white, steeped in a Reformed, European, Scotch-Irish heritage, mixed with the history of Protestantism and sad reality of racism in America. African Americans have to figure out how to exist, contribute, thrive, and be spiritually nourished inside of this ecclesiastical "twoness."

The question of our discussion is: How does Reformed theology help shape the worship of African American Presbyterian congregations? At a more personal level, what are the principles guiding pastors, sessions, musicians, or worship committees as they lead the people in fulfilling our confessional declaration of trust in the Triune God, whom alone we worship and serve? At a practical level, how do we shape worship that will be inviting, relevant to a population that is no longer captive to the total imitation of the ways of white people as legitimization for what they do and how they exist?

These questions, and more, are particularly important for ministers of Word and Sacrament, and elders, who by ordination vow promise obedience to Jesus Christ under the authority of Scripture and continual guidance by our confessions. By polity, the session is "to provide for the worship of the people of God, including the preaching of the Word, the sharing of the Sacraments, for the music program, in keeping with the principles in the Directory for Worship."³ These are matters of constitutional authority.

Let me attempt to address and possibly suggest our discussion of these questions under three broad categories, which I know are important in the arena of African American Church worship, and

which I think are important in Reformed theology. They are praise, prayer, and preaching. Within these categories, we can find both tensions, if not conflicts of cultures, and possibilities for blending these two realities of being black and Presbyterian as we worship. Although Howard Hageman did not write *Pulpit and Table* to address these specific issues, he gives some helpful thoughts as well as some implied freedoms, as we explore our subjects. His distinction between liturgy and ceremony is one example. Liturgy is what the community says in speech, song, and its acts of worship. Ceremony is the way it is said, gestures, actions, settings. His adamant point of there never being a set way for Reformed worship to be done is an invitation to freedom, which is important in the Black Church. But we still have the task of worship being expressive of doctrine and theology. As Hageman writes: "Our liturgical life has always been and still must be under the judgment and corrective of the living Word."⁴

PRAISE

If there can be a favorite Presbyterian Psalm it is the 100th. From a local congregation on any given Sunday to the opening worship of a General Assembly, it has been customary for Presbyterians to sing "All People That on Earth Do Dwell," or "Old Hundred." This hymn is based on that Psalm, which truly shapes our purpose in worship. We are to "make a joyful noise. . . worship the Lord with gladness. . . enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise." In Reformed understanding, all of life is worship and praise, but it has particular shape when we are Christ's gathered community, when we come before God and rejoice. In principle, there is no tension here. Worship is central to the life of the Black Church, the most important thing to be done. Nothing is to compete with "going to church." From the time Christianity was introduced to or imposed on African slaves in America, the actions of worship have been significant and sustaining. As African-American and Presbyterian professor of worship, Dr. Melva Costen writes in *African American Christian Worship*: "The invisible environment allowed free space, God's space, where enslaved worshipers could hear an anticipated hope in God's word."⁵ Expressing the importance of worship among black people even today, Dr. Costen also writes: "A sense of wholeness is facilitated when worshipers can bring all that they are to the beloved community and know that they will be appreciated and affirmed. . . in a context which allows uninhibited response to the grace of God."⁶

Reformed theology makes extremely clear that our worship is addressed to God. No other gods, not even our own needs, are to come before our attention to God in praise. African American congregations share a dilemma of other racial and ethnic groups in our nation of consumers. We must maintain this doctrine of praise to the Sovereign God when people are seeking "to get something out of worship" or "have my needs met."

One way that African American Presbyterians can be faithful to Reformed theology at this point is to adhere to *(continued on page 8)*

Reformed Theology and African American Presbyterian Worship *(continued from page 7)*

worship being Biblical. In this community where Scripture is sacred, the constant quoting of Scripture or use of biblical symbols help to keep the focus on God. Whether a call to worship or an announcement of forgiveness, biblical language has credibility, which facilitates acceptance.

Probably the most challenging area to keep Reformed theology intact is that of music. Historically, the Black Church has sung hymns, even without the accompaniment of trained musicians or exquisite instruments. Acappella singing or hymn choirs characterized much congregational music. Today in many African American churches, including Presbyterian, hymns are questioned as adequate for praise. Gospel songs and contemporary praise melodies are growing in popularity regardless of the beliefs celebrated. The question for pastors is whether these carry the weight of providing “first order theology” which is often a way believers grow in learning and expressing the faith. One avenue of meeting this challenge is to incorporate a variety of musical expressions, and to use more songs composed by or originating from African Americans. The Presbyterian Hymnal of 1990 is more inclusive of racial/ethnic selections than any previous Presbyterian hymnal. It contains 23 selections under the heading “African American.” Music in African American Presbyterian churches must draw from the heritage of “Negro Spirituals,” evangelical hymns popular in Black Church experience, traditional and contemporary Gospel songs. Music does move the soul. This might be explained by professor of ministry Robert E. Webber in his book, *Worship Old & New*: “Music in worship draws the earthly worshiper into the heavens to stand with the heavenly throng as they offer praise to God.”⁷ We should strive to meet that goal.

PRAYER

Our Directory for Worship boldly states that “prayer is at the heart of worship.” In prayer we respond to God in many ways: adoration, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, intercession, illumination, and Eucharist. While these categories of prayer may not have been formally identified, the intent of each has been historically found in black worship. Prayer itself was considered a gift. Some members were well noted as a “praying” deacon or sister. Preachers were automatically expected to be good prayers, who really could draw from the well of divine wisdom and “carry us to the throne of grace.”

In some black churches the tension between liturgical/written and extemporaneous prayer is present. To be faithful to the variety of prayer is also a mild challenge because it implies a formal order of worship. As with music, variety of authors, origin, culture, and language can keep prayer essential and faithful to Reformed theology. Within our Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* and *A Book Of Reformed Prayers* by Howard Rice and Lamar Williamson are found a variety of prayers including some by African Americans and from African churches. Intentional identification and use of these are important. In keeping with this purpose, members could be encouraged to write and offer their personally led prayers, such as deacon’s prayers of thanksgiving, or elder’s prayers of intercession.

PREACHING

Regardless of history or denomination, all black churches have adhered to the centrality of the read and preached Word. This might be the most consistent agreement between historically black and Reformed theology of worship. The Directory for Worship says: “The preached Word or sermon is a proclamation of Scripture in the conviction that through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ is present to the gathered people, offering grace and calling for obedience.” I think that this resonates with the understanding of preaching in African American Churches, especially Presbyterian. The critical question is how much formal theology really does find its way into the proclamation. For some people, quoting the Bible, or jumping from verse to verse is sufficient. In the so-called Word Churches, which are growing in popularity among black people, this is the essence of preaching, supported by familiar or culturally sensitive illustrations. The serious challenge of black Presbyterian preachers is to make the confessional and theological teachings of our church come alive for the listeners of sermons. Can the Reformed themes—majesty, holiness, and providence of God; election for service and salvation; covenant life; faithful stewardship; sin and redemption—truly speak to African Americans today? Do these themes address their pertinent questions of life?

For some the most important thing in preaching is not so much the what as the how. Historically, Reformed preaching has been to the head more than to the heart, at least in its presentation. The opposite might be said for traditional black preaching. Without question, the style of black preaching has been a distinctive feature of worship. It could be described as creative, engaging, biblical, narrative, humorous, stirring, emotional, poetic, political, edifying, spiritual, and exciting. For many years, black Presbyterian ministers focused more on the what—sound doctrine, accurate hermeneutics, and Reformed distinctives. These were considered evidence of a learned ministry. In an article, “Recasting Black Preaching in a Presbyterian Context,” Rev. Robert Newbold, retired Associated Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, gives this critical assessment: “Historically, Black Presbyterian preachers have existed outside this (Black) established tradition. The consensus was Black Presbyterian preachers could not preach; they were hailed as lecturers, teachers, liturgists—not preachers.” Newbold explains that “the preaching model for many Black preachers were White homiletics teachers and writers.”⁸

That is changing with the expectations of black people for worship in the black idiom or Afrocentric style, which is more emotional or lively or culturally sensitive. Some black pastors believe this is necessary to attract newcomers and grow membership. It certainly enhances identity as being more African American Christian than just Presbyterian and Reformed. In a non-documented quote, Newbold reflects the position of black preachers and worshippers who are saying to white Presbyterians: “We acknowledge the importance of Reformed Tradition rooted in European white American culture, while acknowledging the importance of African American culture. . . . We are willing to share some of our rich heritage with you.” *(continued on page 20)*

Book Reviews

The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology: Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought. By Peter A. Lillback. Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, and Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. 331 pp. \$24.99 (paper). ISBN 1-84227-109-1.

The debate over the history and character of “covenant theology” and its relationship to the thought of John Calvin has raged for years. R. T. Kendall’s study, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979), touched on this and other questions, drawing fire from Paul Helm in his “Article Review: Calvin, English Calvinism and the Logic of Doctrinal Development” (*Scottish Journal of Theology*, 34.2, 1981), and his subsequent monograph *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Banner of Truth, 1982). A few years later, M. Charles Bell, a student of James B. Torrance, then professor of theology at Aberdeen University, wrote his *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Handsel Press, 1985) using both Kendall and Torrance as models, roughly paralleling Kendall’s argument, and extending it in a study of soteriology in the Scottish theological context through the early nineteenth-century. This lively debate has been deepened by seminal studies by David Alexander Weir, whose magisterial work, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford, 1990), was originally written as a master’s degree thesis at St. Andrews University, but was assessed by its examiners to be of such exceptional merit that he was awarded a Ph.D., and by Michael McGiffert, James B. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, J. Wayne Baker, Richard Muller, and Holmes Rolston III, to mention only a few, who have taken scholarship far beyond Perry Miller’s renowned, but theologically superficial, studies in the mid-twentieth century.

Peter A. Lillback’s book, the published version of his own dissertation at Westminster Theological Seminary, is the most recent serious study to enter the fray. After providing an admirably detailed, though necessarily brief, summary of the scholarly debate over whether or to what extent Calvin’s own theology is related to covenant and federal theology, and following a short excursus on the “conflicting definitions of covenant theology,” he attempts to demonstrate the continuity between Calvin and his federal successors. Lillback takes Jürgen Moltmann’s broad definition of covenant theology as the standard by which he will judge that Calvin’s thought represents a covenant theology. Indeed, Lillback argues: “Calvin is the first of the early theologians [of the Reformation] to integrate the covenant concept extensively into his theological system. Thus covenant theology owes its existence in various ways to Calvin” (p. 311). However, as Lillback himself observes, Moltmann’s definition of covenant theology is so broad (and, one might add, so lacking in nuance) that few would fail to classify Calvin as a covenant theologian by its standard. “One defines covenant theology,” writes Moltmann, “as a theological method which utilizes the biblical theme of the covenant as the key idea for a) the designation of the relationships of God and man, and b) the presentation of the continuity and discontinuity of redemptive history in the Old and New Testament” (p. 27). That Calvin can be said to adhere to such a broadly conceived “covenant theology”

hardly merits a book of such seriousness or length, considering that most Protestant theologians would also conceive of covenant certainly as the key idea for understanding God’s relationship with humanity, and for discussing God’s redemptive history in the Old and New Testament. Lillback is aware of this fact. He writes, “Few, indeed, would exclude Calvin from the mainstream of covenant theology if this definition is accepted” (p. 27).

Lillback contrasts Moltmann’s broad definition of covenant theology with Charles S. McCoy’s much narrower definition specifying that covenant theology must include a covenant of works between God and humanity that precedes the covenant of grace. Lillback accepts Moltmann’s definition, assuring from the outset that Calvin will be understood as a covenant theologian in the broadest sense. Obviously, however, to show that Calvin’s theology can be characterized as covenant theology, in the sense in which Moltmann uses the term, does not remotely respond to the more difficult and more interesting question as to whether Calvin shares the theological scheme of federal theologians like Zacharius Ursinus, the co-author of the Heidelberg Catechism and the theologian generally acknowledged to have been the first “to articulate the two covenants—the covenant of creation and the covenant of grace” (276).

Weir’s three-fold distinction, which Lillback notes, between the biblical *idea* of covenant itself, the general usages of this idea in a broadly covenantal theology (Moltmann’s definition), and full blown federal theology in which the whole of a theological system is held together by the covenant scheme, including a prelapsarian covenant of works and a postlapsarian covenant of grace (p. 27), provides a far more helpful definition if one wants to determine Calvin’s kinship to the later federal developments which influenced so many late sixteenth and seventeenth-century theologians. Lillback’s task, in fact, is to demonstrate that Calvin, in the narrower sense, is a covenant theologian. A more subtle definition (such as Weir’s) would have helped him to identify clearly the points at which Calvin suggests, if only in a nascent and general form, elements that would be developed systematically by subsequent federal Calvinists. Lillback succeeds in producing some impressive evidence *of this sort*. What he does not do is demonstrate that Calvin’s thought—richly evangelical, ruggedly evocative and powerfully suggestive as it is—can be characterized as covenant theology, not in the sense in which this covenant or federal theology would be recognized within a generation. Is it the case that Calvin resisted working out the implications of certain aspects of his thought? We seem to have evidence for this possibility in his doctrine of election. Or is it that Calvin never imagined that the biblical theme of covenant would be recast into a doctrinal system that effectively, if not intentionally, makes grace appear a second resort and works to be God’s original intention, or that invents what Karl Barth famously referred to as the “false mythology” of a pre-temporal *pactus salutis* between God the Father and God the Son?

This is not to say that Lillback’s book is not valuable. The book provides fascinating and extremely helpful descriptions of Calvin’s use of the covenant idea, contextualizing his thought in relation to the scholastic movement, and to other

(continued on page 10)

Book Reviews

Reformers. It also assists the reader in understanding how elements of Calvin's thought were reshaped as subsequent Reformed theologians made use of him. For this reason alone the book deserves careful and appreciative, if critical, study.

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Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations Beyond Tragedy. By John C. McDowell. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000. xi+263pp. \$84.95 (cloth). ISBN 0754615421.

It is often said that Karl Barth abandoned eschatology after the second edition of *Romans*: in the *Church Dogmatics* everything is known and already complete in Christ. John McDowell seeks to set this rumor aside, and demonstrate that the mature Barth retains a robust and weighty doctrine of Last Things. McDowell frames his argument with a study of tragedy as a genre that recognizes the frailty, ignorance, and tentativeness of all human striving. Can Barth's eschatology "incorporate the tragic vision . . . and take the tragic tragically" (p. 39)?

The book unfolds chronologically. Barth's early work occupies the first two chapters of exposition, heavily dependent, unfortunately, on secondary works. The meat of McDowell's analysis appears in chapters 4-7, and comes into its own in the last two chapters, dedicated to Christ's prophetic work in CD IV.3, 4. It is refreshing to read a work that recognizes that some of the old interpretations of Barth are often little more than caricatures—that Barth has only a "noetic" doctrine of salvation, that he cannot take sin and evil seriously, that his doctrine of election is "universalistic" or that his work suffers from "Christomonism." McDowell offers a balanced reading of Barth, drawing out the complex elements of a christology in which the past governs but does not exhaust the future. Christ's work is perfect and complete, yet still not manifested in its fullness: "Christ's prophetic action is only moving towards its fulfillment" (p. 153). Despite notes of triumphalism, McDowell argues, Barth does preserve an open future in which the tragedy of eternal reprobation and the call to ethical agency remain real and unscripted. "Barth's eschatology *logically* requires both nescience [of the shape of the future] and the entertaining of the possibility of damnation" (p. 221).

Nevertheless, McDowell's insights are undermined by a style fond of abstractions—the book stems from a dissertation—and a scope that attempts to cover too much. Almost every major secondary study of Barth is mentioned, so none can be covered at great depth. We would benefit from hearing more about Donald MacKinnon as counterweight to Barth—MacKinnon's view of the tragic seems to satisfy McDowell's theological aims—yet MacKinnon's work occupies a scant 12 pages. He concludes:

"MacKinnon comes to serve as a reminder to Barth of the theological complexity of the tragic dimension, of a hope without the secure enclaves of even pious talk of triumph. In MacKinnon is put into practice the profound sense of eschatological provisionality and hubristic brokenness of thought and action, culminating in the almost tortuous, tentative, and stammering bringing of Christ's reconciling action to speech and practice" (p. 232). It may well be that McDowell sees too much of MacKinnon in Barth when he defends the tragic in Barth's CD. The light, joy, and infectious energy that radiate from the CD are unmistakable and lead most readers to confirm Hans Frei's judgement that "the one form for the imagination for which he really had little sympathy was the tragic" (p. 216).

This book appears in a series dedicated to "monographs with specialist focus." True to this aim, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology* is a thicket of technical concepts, methodological observations and dense abstractions. In summarizing an important quarrel with R. Robert's interpretation of Barth, McDowell can write: "As well as misconceiving Barth's *dipolar* categorization of eternity, Roberts problematically presses Barth's model by identifying it as CD's hermeneutical key, and thereby he surmounts the confines of its intended boundaries. All overarching hermeneutical keys are suspect, and care must be taken not to overlook Barth's diverse and revisionistic forms of expression" (p. 126). Still, this is an important topic in Barth studies, and the extensive research, bibliography and notes on this important topic will serve Ashgate's readers well, the "student, academic and research readers."

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Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness. By Clark H. Pinnock. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. 224pp. \$19.99 (paper). ISBN 0801022908.

Evangelicals are not generally known for innovation in matters of theology. We prefer to guard and preserve what we consider to be timeless truths. A fascinating exception to this rule is Clark H. Pinnock's *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*. It is an overview and defense of open theology, a ten-year-old movement in which the basic claim is the need to reform classical theism's doctrine of God in light of the biblical narrative. Pinnock maintains that early Christian theologians were too much under the spell of Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek thinkers whose ideas of perfection shaped a God who is absolute, timeless, unchanging, impassible and in complete control. By contrast, says Pinnock, the God of the Bible is dynamic, vulnerable, sympathetic, accessible and committed to relationships. Classical theology's attempt to fuse biblical and Greek thought has resulted in a doctrine of God in which the biblical truths about God are subverted by pagan ideas of perfec-

Book Reviews

tion. The God of classical theology (broadly represented by Thomas Aquinas and Calvin) is closed off to any real interaction with creation. Open theology wishes to posit a more biblically based view of a God who is open to true relationships with others.

Human freedom plays a big part in open theology but it is God's love and God's desire for loving relationships that play the central role in Pinnock's exegesis. Using the parable of the prodigal son as a model of God's providence, Pinnock points to the father's love for both his sons and his refusal to force his sons to return his love. The mutual love desired by the father in the parable requires freedom. Without freedom to reject God's love, human beings are robots incapable of love. But then a true freedom means that God is vulnerable to being rejected. For Pinnock, this shows just how far classical theism, with its impassible, all-controlling God, has strayed from the biblical view. Contra Calvin, the biblical narratives tell stories in which God is not the only actor. God truly reacts to people within the story, pleading with them, arguing with them, and responding to their actions. The Bible's idea of sovereignty is not the despotism of Calvinism but a "divinely willed two-sidedness" in which God sovereignly gives his creatures the freedom to make real choices. Contra Aquinas, God is affected by us. God does not change with respect to his character. God remains faithful. But God is always changing in relationship to us.

The bone that sticks in the throat of many evangelicals is open theology's claim that God lacks exhaustive foreknowledge. In order to act in time, says Pinnock, God must somehow be in time. Open theology rejects the Greek idea that God is eternal and prefers to say with the Bible that God is everlasting. God moves with his people through time wondering what they will do next. (Jeremiah 3:7, Jeremiah 3:19-20, Isaiah 5:1-4.) Pinnock maintains that true human freedom to either reject or participate in a loving relationship with the divine means that God truly does not know what human beings will choose. As such, we have what Pinnock calls "a partially settled future." God has a plan. God will accomplish this plan. But God is always making adjustments based upon the free actions of humanity.

In his desire to achieve a more biblical doctrine of God, Pinnock does not naively believe that he can toss out all philosophical influences upon theology. He is clear about his debt to the process thinkers. While acknowledging his affinity and admiration for Whitehead and Hartshorne, he clearly states what he believes to be the fundamental differences between process and open theologies.

Most Moved Mover is well written and makes a cogent case, but there are times when the author paints with rather a broad exegetical brush. It could be wished that he wrestled with some of the biblical passages which seem to point to a more timeless and controlling God than open theology allows for. Romans 9, Ephesians 1, and Psalm 139 spring to mind. But as an introduction to the main themes of open theology this is a wonderful book.

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Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living
By Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002. 150 pp. \$10.50 (paper). ISBN 0-8028-3981-9.

"What one prayer do you have for your children?" a wise Presbyterian elder asked me when I was yet a young pastor. Glad that in reality I was not limited to just one such prayer, I nonetheless replied, "That God may be with them all their days." "A noble prayer," she said, "but you really don't need to pray for what God will do automatically. You give thanks that God's love is constant and unfailing. So, perhaps a prayer for your children could be that they have faith."

I have thought of her wise counsel and have offered that prayer many times as my children have grown. With one in college, one on his way in the fall, and another soon to follow, I have come to see how important it is to their mother, me, and the Christian community at large that they have faith... that faith is their habit, that faith is not one of many pieces but is integral.

On one level, nothing we say and do as parents can guarantee they have faith. But as our children spread their wings, is there anything we parents and the church can do to help our young people have faith?

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr, President of Calvin Theological Seminary, has retrofitted a document he had written for Calvin College students. This rendition, entitled *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* is intended for a larger Christian audience and is aimed at helping teenagers, college students, and young adults make a stab at pulling off intelligent, articulate, authentic faith.

Plantinga lays out some main themes of the Christian faith in order to show how Christian higher education fits inside a view of the world and of human life that is formed by these themes: creation, fall, redemption, vocation, the kingdom of God, the hope of shalom. Always the educator, he includes an appendix containing useful "talking points" for each of the book's chapters, intended to prompt thoughtful discussions. The overall result is a helpful introduction to Christian faith spoken in what he calls a "Reformed, Augustinian accent."

In a time when certain world leaders seem determined to draw us into war, Plantinga encourages what I take to be a Reformed imagination. "Imitators of Christ, the incarnate one, struggle to see the world through the eyes of others. . . . This struggle will often begin in the simple attempt to imagine how life must be for others, and particularly how it must be for others whose situation in life differs sharply from our own. One who hopes is one who imagines" (p. 10).

Such an approach to life is almost second nature to people who speak in a Reformed accent. But it is a foreign tongue in a world where it is far more common for people to perceive, understand, and judge the world from the point of view of their own advantage. Forget what others may think or feel. Forget trying to understand another worldview.

Plantinga's aim is to help young Christians seek a better way—a way thoroughly grounded in the principles and directions of scripture and the confessions. He invites his readers to discover the purposes of God and to make those purposes (*continued on page 12*)

Book Reviews

their own; to discover the ways of the kingdom and to follow in those ways; to uncover the mind of Christ and to strive to become like-minded (p. 94). One discovers the purposes, ways, and mind of God through a cooperative venture with fellow believers in Christ. “In a community of faith, blessed with an abundance of intelligence, devotion, and experience, bound together in mutual respect and accountability, Christians can explore the heights and depths of the contemporary world. Together, faculty, students, and staff can explore the world and its cultures before pretending to understand them; to understand them before presuming to appraise them; and to appraise them with an educated judgment gained from communion with Jesus Christ” (p. 99).

At stake is nothing less than the restoration of the whole earth. “On the third day Jesus rose from the dead, the pledge that one day all things shall be renewed. And God has called people like us (i.e., Christians) to become agents for the restoration project already in progress” (p. 139).

What Plantinga has provided is engaging, accessible, and intelligent—valuable enough for church leaders to work at coaxing our young into taking the time necessary to learn from this book.

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Growing Toward Unity. Edited by Elisabeth Slaughter Hilke, with a postscript by Thomas Dipko. LTH: Living Theological Heritage, vol. 6. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2001. 784 pages. \$70.00 (cloth). ISBN 0829811125.

This is a remarkable and worthy anthology. The sixth in a comprehensive series of anthologies that trace “the living theological heritage of the United Church of Christ,” its subject is the drive toward ecumenical unity, which resulted in the union of four denominations—the Congregational, the Christian, the Evangelical and the Reformed—first into two and finally into one body, the United Church of Christ, in 1957.

This volume depicts the movement toward union as an arduous process that lasted for decades: involving raised and dashed hopes, criticism, resistance, theological and practical arguments and negotiations—both within and among all four denominations. This struggle occurred within the broader context of a global ecumenical movement, which produced organizations like the National and World Councils of Churches. All this is recounted through scores of primary sources that have been expertly edited and introduced by Elisabeth Slaughter Hilke.

Hilke does an admirable job of including diverse points of view: both those of famous figures in American Christianity (Washington Gladden and the Niebuhrs) and ordinary people in the pews. More space is devoted to the proponents of church union, but opponents have a place as well: “They’re planning to take your

church,” argued the League to Uphold Congregational Principles in 1956 (p. 645). While the editor does have a stake in the outcome of the history she records—she occasionally uses the terms “fortunately” and “unfortunately” in her introductions—she also invites readers to draw their own conclusions. While the purpose of this series of volumes is to increase theological literacy in the United Church of Christ, Hilke does so by informing readers with a variety of theological perspectives, not by indoctrinating them with a single rationale for Christian unity.

Thus, the volume raises many questions about the pursuit of Christian unity, some of which are highlighted in a concluding reflection by Thomas Dipko. Others are implicit. The most basic question that occurred to me is, why pursue interdenominational unity at all? Specifically, why pursue Christian unity according to the pattern established by United Church of Christ in 1957: by means of merging denominational structures? Why not take the more clean-slate approach that recent “nondenominational” or “post-denominational” churches have taken: creating new congregations that stand, or at least appear to stand, outside the boundaries of denominational traditions, and which seek to attract both the “unchurched” and people from all denominational backgrounds? This question becomes especially pressing as such churches continue to gain members, while mainline denominations, including the United Church of Christ, continue to diminish in numbers.

The anti-traditionalist, clean-slate approach actually has some support in this volume. The most obvious example comes from members of the Southern Christian Conference, who until 1818 destroyed their written records, so fearful were they of burdening future generations with past baggage. Similarly, the Congregationalist missionary Margaret Slattery, attending the Lausanne Faith and Order Conference of 1927, bemoaned its preoccupation with “The Past—a long gone past” (p. 98) and with “forms and phrases, traditional shibboleths, fine shadings in word meanings. . . these things filled my soul with rebellion” (p. 103).

This antitraditionalist stance presses a valid point. To pursue Christian unity along denominational lines is to hold a stake in denominations and their histories. Is this proper? It is if one understands the goal of ecumenism to be not only to unite individual Christians, but to unite strands of tradition. Such an approach assumes that the Holy Spirit is alive and active within the particular structures, beliefs and practices of denominations, even if those particularities have separated denominations from each other over the decades. It assumes that these strands of tradition can be reconciled without diminishing their creative uniqueness.

This latter approach finds support in this volume as well, in the nineteenth-century Reformed scholar Philip Schaff’s explanation of the origin and purpose of denominations and their place in the universal church. While Schaff concedes “no schism occurs in the church without guilt on both sides,” he also says that such divisions have a place in God’s providence (p. 295). Schaff celebrates denominational variety as an aspect of cultural diversity. He argues that even the most divisive doctrinal differences are necessary, dialectical expressions of a broader, mysterious truth, which “is many-sided and all-sided.” He anticipates a day when “every denomination

Book Reviews

which holds to Christ the head will retain its distinctive peculiarity, and lay it on the altar of reunion" (p. 297). This volume includes many such documents, which are fruitful resources for contemporary theological reflection on Christian unity.

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Do No Harm: Social Sin and Christian Responsibility. By Stephen G. Ray, Jr. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003. 208 pp. \$17.00 (paper). ISBN 0800634977.

We do not view social realities "from nowhere," but from very definite points of view which are structured by linguistic conventions rooted in social interests. This, by and large, is the message of Stephen Ray to theologians who wish to employ "sin" language to interpret contemporary social life. When "sin" or "sinner" is used to signify specific persons or practices, he argues, "discursive economies" that serve to legitimate given power structures by degrading or even dehumanizing persons or sectors of a society that are viewed as threats are all but inevitably invoked. "Sin" talk thereby becomes entangled with established prejudices. The end result is that such talk sanctions rather than challenges the marginalization of persons. Ray's plea to theologians to "do no harm" is intended to call attention to these sorts of (mostly unintended) consequences of employing "sin" talk carelessly.

The bulk of Ray's argument is a diagnosis of the problem. Two of the more illustrious twentieth-century theological critics of contemporary culture, Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, are used as examples. Ray performs a "rhetorical analysis" upon their work in order to expose the unwholesome, and quite subtle, influence of racist discursive economies upon their interpretations of contemporary social problems. Niebuhr's account of the oppression of blacks in America, he suggests, employs such standard, though heavily freighted, expressions as "Negro" and "backward culture" in such a way that the agency of African Americans is underappreciated. This glitch in Niebuhr's analysis, according to Ray, creates a category of persons who are unique embodiments of social sin (since they do not responsibly contribute to society's welfare), but who are by definition incapable of exercising agency. The creation of this category of "fated sinner" for the purpose of referring to a marginalized social group, Ray charges, unwittingly sanctions its marginalization. Another way in which theologians collude with unwholesome discursive economies, according to Ray, is exemplified in Bonhoeffer's characterization of "the Jew." In this case, though Bonhoeffer argued forcefully against the oppression of Jewish people in Hitler's Germany, his uncritical use of the expression, "the Jew," effectively reinforces cultural prejudices about a social group viewed as "alien" or "other," and thus condemns them as a threat to the social order.

Ray's argument is not all diagnosis and no "cure," however. His proposal for avoiding the pitfall of "sin" talk he identifies in Niebuhr and Bonhoeffer involves a retrieval of the "principle of participation" which characterized the Reformers' doctrine of sin. For Luther and Calvin, Ray points out, all persons are tainted before God because they participate in the original sin of Adam. Thus, Ray argues, a differentiation in the fundamental condition of human beings as sinners is ruled out. The category of sin, therefore, may not be licitly used within the Reformers' theological trajectory in order to render an "existential assessment of the state of human affairs," or to "make relative judgments about differing social configurations" (p. 109).

For many readers, the solution embodied in these quotations will be disappointing. Ray is at his strongest when he deftly points out the ways in which racist discursive economies subtly infect theological analysis and thereby cause it to distort, rather than illumine, reality. This is an important critique, since for theologians like Niebuhr the illumination of reality is one of the purposes of theology. Ray's counsel, however, is not to work harder at this task, or to interact more thoroughly with contemporary sources of insight about current social realities, but to stop trying to make "sin" a category that refers to empirical realities at all. Ray appears to believe that "sin" talk, properly used, is merely a way to fence out the dangers of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that intrude upon the theologian who attempts social criticism. From the perspective of a theological "realist," Ray pays a hefty price for this security, however. Theology, in his view, can have nothing to say in order to help us with the traditionally religious task of discriminating good and evil in our world. "Secular" knowledge, it would appear, is left in control of the field.

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God's Renaissance Man: Abraham Kuyper. By James E. McGoldrick. Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2000. 320 pp. \$18.99 (paperback). ISBN 0852344465.

In 1898 Dutch Calvinist philosopher, theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) gave the Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary, which resulted in a volume (still in print) titled *Lectures on Calvinism*. Exactly a century later, Princeton sponsored a conference on Kuyper in conjunction with the 1998 Stone Lectures, which were given by Yale philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, one of Kuyper's intellectual and theological descendants. It was something of a surprise even to its organizers that about 400 people showed up for the conference from all around the world. Indeed, it turned out to be one of the largest conferences ever held at Princeton Seminary during an academic year.

Who was Abraham Kuyper, and why is his thinking increasingly attractive to so many Christians? This *(continued on page 14)*

Book Reviews

book by James McGoldrick, a history professor at Cedarville College in Ohio, aims to answer these questions, at least in part. It is a semi-popular, topically-arranged account of Kuyper's theology, social philosophy, and political legacy, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Previous biographies of Kuyper in English are now out of print, and in any event lacked the helpful documentation (most of it also from English sources) that McGoldrick provides. The result is a readable introduction to Kuyper's legacy, albeit from the perspective of a rather classic—perhaps even nostalgic—Calvinist. Nick Wolterstorff once memorably analyzed his own Dutch-American subculture as embodying an uneasy tension among “Pies, Docs and Kuypers”—that is, other-worldly pietists, theologically-inclined doctrinalists, and world-reforming Kuyperians. McGoldrick's grid for analyzing and evaluating Kuyper is mainly doctrinal, as evidenced by the fact that he devotes three full chapters directly (and several others indirectly) to theology, emphasizing in particular Kuyper's doctrines of God, sin, salvation and the church, but also reheating old Calvinist chestnuts such as the debate on supralapsarianism and the meaning of baptism.

But McGoldrick is a thorough enough historian to pay close attention to Kuyper's social philosophy, with its stress on confessional pluralism and the sovereign rights of institutions such as the family, the arts, science, politics, and education, which is the basis of the “pillarization” of Dutch society. This is the policy of allowing tax dollars to subsidize Catholic, Protestant, liberal, and socialist educational and other institutions in proportion to their numbers in the population, a legacy that continues in America in the public policy work of the Washington-based Center for Public Justice, with its support for the expansion of school vouchers and faith-based initiatives in social services. He traces Kuyper's political career, including his years as the Dutch prime minister (1901-1905) and his leadership of a Calvinist political party which rejected equally the individualist legacy of the French Revolution and the collectivist vision that would eventually become communism.

He also documents Kuyper's work on the doctrine of common grace—the notion that God can get God's work done through whomever God pleases, not just through those who believe in him. Kuyper in fact varied in his stress on common grace throughout his career, sometimes emphasizing it more, sometimes less, than the antithesis between believers and unbelievers. But in either case, he parlayed his Calvinist world view into an astute analysis of the challenges of industrialization and urbanization, and into successful policies that included expansion of the franchise, workers' compensation, and public assistance to the poor. In this he was in articulate agreement with Pope Leo XIII who, in his 1891 encyclical, rejected socialism while calling for biblically-grounded economic justice towards the laboring classes.

McGoldrick does not lionize Kuyper: he suspects that he drifted from classic Reformed theology in certain ways, and does not avoid mentioning that it was a distortion of Kuyper's thinking on sphere sovereignty that was partly responsible for the rise of *Apartheid* in South Africa. At the same time, his book is definitely a species of “great man” historiography, one which treats Kuyper almost as if he had sprung full-blown from the head of Zeus. We

hear almost nothing of the influence of gender and class on Kuyper himself—not even the fact that it was his own fiancée who gave him the English pietist novel that led him, in the midst of recovery from a nervous breakdown, to return to his Calvinist roots. Nor do we hear anything about the fact that his large household was run mainly by his wife and servants, a division of labor that was simply taken for granted by middle-class male professionals of his day, and which allowed him to engage in the cycle of workaholic and psychic breakdown that characterized his adult life. For a more fine-grained analysis of these and other issues, readers might consult Luis Lugo's edited volume from the 1998 conference, *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2000). But for those whose interest in Kuyper and his legacy is still in its early stages, McGoldrick's volume is a readable and well-referenced introduction to a large and growing literature on this controversial figure.

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Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning By Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, edited by Gloria Goris Stronks and Clarence W. Joldersma. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002. 304 pp. \$21.99 (paper). ISBN 080102479X.

In this well-written and accessible collection of essays and speeches, Nicholas Wolterstorff addresses a number of topics related to Christian day schooling. He outlines the purpose of the Christian day school and relates that purpose to curriculum concerns. He answers a diverse number of critics of the Christian day school endeavor who believe that it is, variously, conformist, isolationist, or irrelevant in modern society. He advocates altering the current system of school funding to make public funds available for private, religious schools. Finally, he discusses the Christian life of gratitude, peace-making, and justice-seeking that the Christian day school should inculcate.

These diverse essays do not advance a single line of argument and are hard to summarize. Yet, throughout, Wolterstorff draws upon the rich tradition of American Dutch Calvinism to construct a theological vision of education and its place in society.

From Wolterstorff's perspective, education is an inescapable feature of human existence. In contrast to bugs and rocks, humans are created to learn. Being finite, they must choose what they learn. We cannot learn it all. When teachers make decisions regarding the curriculum, they not only select what their students will learn, but they decide the sorts of people their students will become.

Building on this foundation, Wolterstorff corrects a previous generation of Christian day school proponents who thought that the aim of Christian education was imparting a Christian worldview.

Book Reviews

Such a goal, he contends, is far too modest. He argues that a better goal is educating for the life of faithful discipleship in today's world. Faithful disciples, he says, live their whole life before God and seek Christ's Lordship in every sphere of life.

Wolterstorff concludes that education in the service of this purpose must address the whole person. It must recognize that we are embodied creatures with intellect and affections. It must be relevant to who students are today and who they will become tomorrow. It must attend to the powerful unspoken messages that are imparted through the school's ethos so that they are consistent with the life for which the school educates. It must approach every field of knowledge in a way that teaches students that all life is lived before God. Such an education must not isolate students in a Christian ghetto, but must expose them to non-Christian and anti-Christian voices of the broader culture. Thus equipped, students can exercise the cultural mandate of Genesis 1 and develop a culture that is oriented to God and that sustains flourishing.

Wolterstorff draws on the Kuyperian understanding of spheres to articulate his view of the school's authority. Like many in this tradition, he believes that since God has given children to parents, the basic right and responsibility for a child's education inheres in the parents. The realities of life, however, are such that parents cannot fulfill this obligation by themselves and must entrust their children to schools. Teachers and schools derive their authority to teach from parents and maintain that authority based on their educational competence. Although parents bestow educational authority on the school they choose, they retain the responsibility of seeing to it that their children are educated according to their religious beliefs and, if they are not, to seek an education elsewhere.

Wolterstorff thinks that public education in common schools is a mistake. He complains that education in common schools violates the conscience of those who, like him, think that all life is lived before God. Furthermore, he observes that public schools cannot present a morally thick or compelling account of citizenship because they cannot refer to transcendent values. To remedy this situation, Wolterstorff advocates a system of school choice. Such a system would empower all parents, whatever their religious beliefs, to educate their children according to the dictates of their conscience.

Reformed Christians have long been divided on the wisdom of common schooling. When common schooling started, voices within the reformed tradition objected. For example, the Southern Presbyterian theologian, Charles Dabney, denied that secular education was possible, claimed that public education encroached on the sphere of the family, and predicted that the dynamic of common schooling in a pluralistic society would make schools and society godless. Dutch Calvinists in the Midwest viewed things similarly and formed their own schools.

In most other reformed communions, however, this position became the minority voice. Education historian, Lawrence Cremin, reminds us that the advocates and leaders of the early common school movement in most states were largely drawn from the ranks of the Congregational and Presbyterian clergy. Inspired by John Calvin and the Puritans, these leaders viewed public education as a

common good. They continued supporting public education as it shed its religious content during the 19th century and when it dropped prayer and bible reading in the 20th century. They stood by public education during integration and the gloomy days of massive resistance. Through the years, they maintained that public education was indispensable to a happy and holy society and trusted that a secular education would not hinder them in the task of forming disciples.

In recent years the minority position has received a new hearing. In the 1980's a nascent school choice movement began championing public funding for private and religious schools. This movement has grown considerably and is challenging common schooling across America. Voices in this movement range from libertarians, such as Myron Lieberman, to religious conservatives, such as Pat Robertson. From this reviewer's perspective, none is as articulate as Nicholas Wolterstorff.

There are many things to affirm in Wolterstorff's thinking. Surely he is correct to maintain that faithful disciples live all life before God and seek Christ's Lordship in every sphere of life. Surely he is correct to call our attention to the theological dimensions of all fields of knowledge. The God we worship is, after all, the God of all things. Finally, he is surely right to say that the purpose of the church's educational program goes beyond inculcating a Christian worldview, but must aim to educate for the faithful life.

Having said this, this reviewer disagrees with Wolterstorff's reading of the spheres as it pertains to education. Wolterstorff, as we have seen, believes that God gives parents the primary right and responsibility to determine their child's education. In an ideal world, parents bequeath this responsibility to the school they choose, while retaining the right to choose another school or no school.

God surely does entrust children to parents, but doesn't God also entrust children to the world? In no society, not even one, are parents the sole educators of their children. Although parents do have a significant responsibility to oversee their children's education, an obligation also rests on the larger whole community to ensure that every child is well educated. Public schools fail when they do not provide some equality of opportunity and prepare everyone to participate in civil society. A fuller understanding of education in relationship to the spheres will lead us to resist lodging educational responsibility entirely in any one sphere, whether it be the family or the public school. It will also help us appreciate that God has given each sphere (the family, church, state, the media, etc.) a distinctive role to play in the stewardship of the education and nurture of children.

Wolterstorff is concerned that public schools teach children that God is irrelevant or limited to a sphere of life called "religion." Either result would, admittedly, distort the formation of a faithful disciple. Yet, this need not be the case. This is illustrated by a second criticism he levels at the public schools: he says that public schools are unable to answer when their teaching about morals leads students to ask "Why?" or "Who says so?" Isn't it the case, though, that anytime the school has moved a *(continued on page 16)*

Book Reviews

student to “Why?” the school has succeeded in conveying the profound importance of religion? Wolterstorff complains that if schools can’t answer “Why?” its moral education must be incoherent. True, but a bit of incoherence at *this* point would only be a bad thing in a society without a church. When a student asks, “Why?” the public school should tell students that the question is very important and worth pursuing, but they have no authority to answer (because the question is *so* important), and refer them to those with that authority: their family and religious institution. This, of course, means that those of us in the church and the family need to be ready and equipped to answer.

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Worship: Reformed according to Scripture. By Hughes Oliphant Old. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. 195 pp. \$19.95 (paper). ISBN: 0-664-22579-9

It has been nearly two decades since the publication of Hughes Oliphant Old’s classic book *Worship* in the John Knox Press series “Guides to the Reformed Tradition.” During those two decades, we have witnessed a resurgence of interest in both the roots of the Reformed faith and the liturgical practices that shape and define those who adhere to that faith. It is appropriate then that Old’s work should reappear in a revised and expanded edition as we ponder the relevance of the Reformed tradition and, specifically, its contributions to Christian worship in the twenty-first century.

Old’s revised book is organized in exactly the same manner as the original work, with chapters addressing different dimensions of the liturgy including baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Day, the ministries of praise, prayer, and the word, daily prayer, and alms. Each chapter recounts at length the biblical and historical origins of the liturgical practice under discussion, demonstrating Old’s contention that one cannot simply enter liturgical life in the sixteenth or seventeenth century to understand Reformed worship. Rather, he maintains, the roots of Reformed worship are to be found “in scripture and in the life of the early church.” The inclusion of a vast number of scriptural references throughout the book confirms the first characteristic of Reformed worship identified by Old: that “it is worship that is ‘according to Scripture’” (p. 3). Indeed, Old argues at the conclusion of the book, the primary reason the liturgical traditions of the Reformed faith continue to commend themselves to us today is “because they are, above all, according to Scripture” (p. 172). In addition to his careful attention to the scriptural roots of the Reformed tradition, Old notes the contributions of the many scholars and church leaders who, through the centuries of Christianity, have shaped the Reformed faith. His extensive references to theologians and leaders of the church throughout its history make clear the direct lineage between the historic witness of the church and the faith we profess today.

Worship is an invaluable resource for pastors, teachers, and students of the Reformed tradition as well as anyone interested in the roots of that tradition and its contributions to Christian faith

and practice. Old’s remarkable knowledge of Scripture and church history make this book worth reading for general knowledge not only of the Reformed tradition but of Christian tradition in general. One of the few criticisms of the book is its lack of specific citations. Old’s work is packed with wonderful information but includes only a handful of endnotes, leaving the reader wanting specific references for the wealth of information in the text. A “Select Bibliography for the Study of Reformed Worship” helps make up for the lack of notes. It includes historical works as well as many books written over the past twenty years. Unlike the bibliography included in the previous edition, however, this one is not divided according to time periods.

Old concludes his book with an acknowledgment of the present interest among American Protestant churches in the renewal of worship, noting the quest for programs and liturgical styles that will attract people to church. He poses the question, “How can we possibly minister to those who thirst for the real thing?” (p. 176), and, in answering it, warns against the temptation to yield to worship practices that are devoid of biblical and historical roots and thus diminish the value of the Reformed tradition. As a result, this is not the book for those seeking quick liturgical “fixes” for churches in decline or congregations engaged in “worship wars.” This *is*, however, the book for those who desire a clear understanding of the biblical, historical, and ecclesiastical traditions from which our present practices emerged. Only such knowledge of the past can enable us to make informed and faithful decisions about the future of Reformed worship.

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Biblical Poetics Before Humanism and Reformation. By Christopher Ocker. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xvi + 265 pp. \$65.00 (cloth). ISBN 0521810469.

The thesis of this book by a professor of history at San Francisco Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley is that from the 12th century to the beginning of the 16th biblical exegetes gradually moved away from recognizing a distinction between the literal/historical and the spiritual senses. Increasingly exegetes saw the literal sense as the bearer of spiritual meaning. Early Protestant exegesis reflects this change in exegetical method; it was not a break with the previous several centuries of exegesis, but their outcome. However, the first Protestant exegetes also benefited from the resurgence of the study of rhetoric that began in the 15th century.

The core of Christopher Ocker’s argument is found in three chapters devoted to three aspects of late medieval exegesis: signification, rhetoric and divine speech. These central chapters are framed by an overview of medieval exegesis and a brief look at how Reformation exegesis prolonged or altered these three dimensions.

In late antiquity, Christians developed an allegorical reading of Scripture, which studied the literal meaning, but also sought

Book Reviews

spiritual understandings. The twelfth-century theologians of the monastery of St. Victor in Paris, who pondered and perfected this method of exegesis, insisted that the spiritual interpretations ought to be rooted in the literal meaning. In the Victorine scheme, the words of the text referred to created things whose qualities in turn referred to spiritual realities. Created things mediated between biblical words and spiritual realities.

The traditional theory regarding the literal and spiritual senses had difficulty locating the signification of metaphorical language. In the later Middle Ages, metaphor was placed in the literal sense, so that both figure and figured pertained to the literal sense. Similarly the words of the prophets could have more than one literal sense: they could refer to the prophet's own circumstances and also to Christ. These developments were connected with a growing conviction that words themselves signify, and so the words of the Bible signify spiritual realities more directly than the Victorine theory suggested. However, late medieval exegetes read the Bible as a contemporary document. They were not interested in studying the historical setting and thought world of the author. They also thought that doctrine was a logical summary and development of what the Bible taught in a discursive way. Hence, biblical commentaries included treatment of theological questions.

By the middle of the thirteenth century, logic supplanted rhetoric in the arts faculties. Whereas early monastic exegesis had consisted in compliant, prayerful thinking with the ancient authors, with the rise of scholasticism, tradition was less an act than received doctrines and arguments. However, late medieval exegetes did insist that the Bible had its own rhetoric; with a simple style the biblical authors conveyed profound mysteries.

Emphasizing the simplicity of divine speech, late medieval authors like Jean Gerson sought to free exegesis from subtle and

useless philosophical issues. God was the moving efficient cause of a biblical book; the author was a moving and moved cause. Since the Holy Spirit was the primary author, the Bible could be read ahistorically, and one could expect to find in the literal meaning doctrinal truth that the human author may not have directly intended. The reader of the Bible read charismatically under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit, but also communally within the living tradition of the church shaped by the Holy Spirit. In interpreting, learned readers transformed the narrative speech of the biblical authors into sentences that they could then subject to logical analysis.

Early Protestant exegetes accepted the late medieval understanding of verbal signification and the immediacy of the thought world of the text to that of the interpreter. The new interest in rhetoric helped them move from biblical narrative to theological discussion. They used the traditional idea of the simplicity of the Bible to argue against the need for authorities outside the faith-filled reader.

This is a well-researched, well-produced book. Ocker argues his position by analyzing a wide selection of published and unpublished sources. Some of the most important of those Latin sources are edited in an appendix. In citing sources, Ocker almost always gives both an English translation and the Latin text. It is sometimes difficult to grasp the thread of the argument, as the author moves from minute analysis to generalization.

Ocker studies late medieval exegesis primarily, then looks briefly at its continuation and development among the early Protestant exegetes. His approach is nicely complemented by the festschrift for David Steinmetz, *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, edited by Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Eerdmans, 1996), which begins with an overview of late medieval exegesis, then studies specific examples of Reformation exegesis.

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If you know someone who would enjoy receiving the IRT *Bulletin*, please send their address to:

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Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: A Historical and Practical Theology. By John W. Riggs. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. ix + 187 pp. \$22.95 (cloth). ISBN 0664219667.

In his Introduction, John Riggs asks a critical question: Can Protestants borrow liturgical forms from Roman Catholics without consulting Protestant theologies, especially those of Luther and Calvin? Riggs's book asks not only for a reassessment of baptism within the Lutheran and Reformed traditions, but also for a reassessment of the *desideratum* of ecumenical dialogue. He reminds his readers that "the ecumenical movement understands that ecumenism begins with an honest appraisal of what the differing Christian traditions believe and where there is real difference. This approach avoids consensus made too easily and allows for traditions to learn about themselves as well as to learn from other traditions" (pp.124-25). Riggs begins and concludes his study with brief discussions of the liturgical movement that *(continued on page 18)*

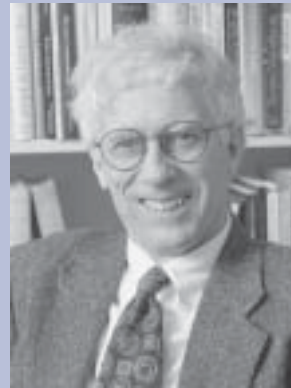
IRT Public Lecture Features Nicholas Wolterstorff

Nicholas Wolterstorff, the Noah Porter Professor Emeritus of Philosophical Theology at the Divinity School at Yale University, spoke at a public lecture for the Institute for Reformed Theology at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education.

The lecture, "Can Life in Business Still be a Calling? Or is That Day Over?", was given Thursday, March 18, 2004 in Watts Chapel at Union-PSCE in Richmond, VA. The text of his lecture can be found at the IRT website, www.reformedtheology.org.

Dr. Wolterstorff's distinguished career includes professorships at Yale, the Free University of Amsterdam, and Calvin College as well as many visiting professor engagements including one at the University of Notre Dame in the Fall of 2003. He has been the recipient of several fellowships including ones from the National

Endowment for the Humanities and the Danforth



Endowment. He has served as President of the American Philosophical Association (Central Division), as well as on its publication and executive committees. In addition to numerous articles, he has written a number of books including *Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning* (2002), *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (1995), and *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (1983). He is presently working on a new book entitled *Justice: Divine and Human*.

Book Reviews

began at the end of the nineteenth century and culminated in Vatican II (1962-65) and its product, the Roman Catholic Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) (1972).

Riggs refers to Luther's baptismal theology and then sketches the history and variety of traditions among the Reformed churches. He criticizes the *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)* and the Reformed *Book of Common Worship (BCW)*, together with their supporting theologies, as having been too much influenced by the liturgical movement and the RCIA, itself the result of a return to the rites of initiation current in the fourth and fifth centuries. Riggs argues that in Luther's baptismal *Sintlutgebet* (Flood Prayer) and in the Reformed traditions, Baptism has not been seen primarily as an initiation, but a form of the proclamation of the Word. He suggests revising the *BCW* to reflect that priority. "Baptism is primarily the promise, or offer, or pledge, of God's grace. It is not primarily an initiation into the church, whether 'church' be considered a local congregation or the mystical body of Christ" (p.119). Baptism's ultimate orientation, writes Riggs, is christocentric, "offering Christ in the sacrament and engrafting those with faith into Christ himself" (p. 122).

While Luther and Calvin emphasized the promise/sign nature of sacraments, Riggs sees no contradiction between this theological orientation and the covenant theology derived primarily from Bullinger and developed in the seventeenth century by Calvinist orthodoxy. Riggs argues for a new kind of *Harmonia confessionum* (1581), although he seems unaware of the existence of this Reformed answer to the Lutheran Formula of Concord. Riggs's own preference is for a strong covenant theology dominating the promise/sign theology through an appeal to the personal address of the Word to the hearer who may or may not receive that Word with faith. The firm grounding of the sacraments is thus the "character of God as grace offered to humankind, to which we (secondarily or derivatively) make our response" (p. 121).

The test case in Riggs's examination of all these theologies and practices is infant baptism, defended by some, for example Zwingli,

Luther, and Calvin, and questioned by others, for example Schleiermacher and Barth. While infant baptism is not strictly necessary according to Calvin, its ultimate efficacy in any case is a matter of God's election that gifts the individual with the faith necessary to respond positively. Riggs also discusses the relation of predestination to the covenant in the various Reformed traditions.

This is a book on which to base a serious discussion of sacramental theology and practice in the Reformed churches and in ecumenical dialogues. Riggs is provocative and well grounded, although his text raises a number of questions and provokes some criticisms. For example, I question the heavy emphasis on the one-on-one relation of God to each person while relegating the community to a role less than "secondary." This is hardly a Pauline position nor is it a credible interpretation of Christian history and doctrine, east or west, prior to the seventeenth century. Nor does Riggs pay sufficient attention to Calvin's appreciation of the sign-nature of the sacraments. While both are Word in that both the Gospel and the sacraments offer to faith Christ himself, to reduce both to proclamation and to hearing is to deny Calvin's argument that sacraments appeal to all the human senses and apply the Word to each individual. The book needs better editing. It contains typos and an annoying use of the preposition "to" in at least two dozen places where the preposition should be "of" or "in" or even the phrase "with regard to". In two places, it muddies the meaning (pp. 77, 120).

But when all is said and done, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition* is a fine example of historical theology applied to liturgical practice. Because its theses and the use of some terms, e.g., "valid," are debatable, they deserve to be debated with the same seriousness and care that Riggs has given them in this monograph.

Jill Raitt

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Institute for Reformed Theology Affiliate News

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship offers both rigorous scholarship and practical resources to enrich Christian worship in churches throughout North America.

The Institute is offering a number of seminars and conferences this winter.

April 20, 2004: "Preaching and Culture" (lecture)

Timothy Brown, Henry Bast professor of preaching, Western Theological Seminary, Holland Michigan, will speak about the factors in contemporary culture that preachers must take into account as they seek to preach in ways that connect with and transform their listeners and congregations.

April 20, 2004: Seminar on Preaching

Timothy Brown, Henry Bast professor of preaching, Western Theological Seminary, and Duane Kelderman, professor of preaching, Calvin Theological Seminary, will lead a panel discussion on current issues in preaching.

May 1, 2004: Spring Conference on Worship and Preaching

Howard Vanderwell, resource specialist for pastoral leadership, and Norma deWaal Malefyt, resource specialist for congregational song, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, will lead this workshop for pastors, musicians, and other church leaders. They will speak about the uniqueness of Reformed worship and address current issues in worship and preaching. This conference will be held in Ames, Iowa.

May 6, 2004: "Reclaiming Adiphora in Postmodern Times" (lecture)

Jung Suk Rhee, associate professor of systematic theology and Korean ecclesiology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, will speak about honoring diversity both culturally and theologically in these postmodern times. He will use the *adiaphora* principle as a theological ground for diversity.

May 18-20, 2004: "Enhancing Ministry Among Us" (conference)

This conference for pastors will focus on two aspects of ministry. Jeffrey Weima, professor of New Testament, Calvin Theological Seminary, will lead sessions on an exploration of I Corinthians and how to develop a sermon series. Ronald Nydam, professor of pastoral care, Calvin Theological Seminary, will lead sessions on marriage and divorce. A one-day follow-up conference will take place on September 21, 2004. This conference is supported in part by a grant from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program of the Christian Reformed Church. This conference will be held in Sioux Center, Iowa.

June 7-11, 2004: "The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry" (academic course)

This course will integrate theological understanding of pastoral ministry with the basic practices of pastoral ministry: worship, preaching, teaching, evangelism, pastoral care, and congregational leadership. The course will be taught at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

For more information on these and other events, go to http://www.calvin.edu/worship/educate_events/index.htm, call (616) 526-6088, or write the Institute of Christian Worship, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402.

The Calvin Studies Society

The primary purpose of the Calvin Studies Society is to engage in and promote the study of the thought, life, and times of John Calvin. The Society also focuses on other figures and subjects related to the Reformed movement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, invites applications from faculty at U.S. colleges and universities for its summer seminar, "John Calvin and the Transformation of Religious Culture in Geneva, France and Beyond", funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The seminar will run from June 28 to July 30, 2004, at the Meeter Center in Grand Rapids, and will be co-taught by Raymond Mentzer, of the University of Iowa, and Karin Maag, the Meeter Center director. The main topics covered in readings and discussions will be liturgy and worship, education and training, and discipline.

Potential applicants are invited to contact Karin Maag (kmaag@calvin.edu) or Raymond Mentzer (raymond-mentzer@uiowa.edu) for further information and to request an application package.

For more information, check out their website at <http://www.calvinstudiessociety.org/index.html>

(continued on page 2)

Reformed Theology and African American Presbyterian Worship *(continued from page 8)*

Whether worship of African American Presbyterians will be shaped by Reformed theology is a question, which quite frankly might not even be asked as these congregations seek for relevancy, vitality and indeed a future. With new, maybe liberated sensitivities and appropriate pride in our heritage, priority could be given to what is deemed more authentically African American Christian over what is accepted and understood as Presbyterian. It can only be hoped that among African American Presbyterians true worship of Almighty God, faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ and life in the power of the Holy Spirit will remain paramount in our life of discipleship.

ENDNOTES

¹ W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (New York: The Modern Library, 1963), p. xxii.

² Ibid, p. 5.

³ Book of Order, G-10.0102d.

⁴ Howard Hageman, *Pulpit and Table: Some Chapters in the History of Worship in the Reformed Churches* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), p. 16.

⁵ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 15.

⁶ Ibid, p. 78.

⁷ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 195.

⁸ Robert Newbold, "Recasting Black Preaching in a Presbyterian Context," *Periscope* 3 (1992): p. 17.

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