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REVIEWS

Essays on Religion, Science, and Society

Herman Bavinck

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008 304pp., \$39.99; ISBN 9780801032417

It is an unexpected gift, and benefit to the church, to have more of Herman Bavinck's writings translated into English and published in our day. On account of the diligent translation work of Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheers, Baker Academic has recently published the newest volume of Bavinck's writings, *Essays on Religion, Science and Society*. This volume, edited by John Bolt, provides a valuable synthesis of Bavinck's theological and sociological contributions. The title succinctly captures the content of these essays giving the reader something of the Dutch theologian's depth of insight into a plethora of social and religious issues. Bavinck impresses the reader with a consistent application of his *weltanschauung* as he grapples with the philosophical, psychological, and religious issues facing the church. Although it may appear anachronistic to describe it in this way, those who appreciate Bavinck's *presuppositional* approach will be delighted to find a consistent Christian theistic worldview worked out in his analysis of such topics as religious studies, psychology of religion, Christianity and natural science, trends in psychology, the unconscious, classical education, and the relation between ethics and politics. Some of the most thought provoking essays are those that deal with the issues of inequality, beauty and aesthetics, the relationship between Christ and culture, and evolution.

In the opening section of his essay on inequality, Bavinck shows how the problem of the one and the many relates to this aspect of society. He then exhibits his true intellectual greatness by contrasting the life and work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau with that of John Calvin. The two French intellectuals both of whom live in and brought great influence to Geneva—while centuries removed—nevertheless, offered variant solutions to the issue of inequality in society. The difference was to be found in their doctrine of man. In regard to human nature, "Calvin sought the cause of all misery in sin...[whereas] Rousseau blamed society and civilization (155)." Interestingly, Bavinck explained that as a French citizen, "Rousseau, in spite of himself, acknowledged the greatness and superiority of Calvin (159)."¹ Indeed, he includes the following quotation from

¹ Bavinck includes the following quote from Rousseau's *The Social Contract*: "Those who know Calvin only as a theologian much underestimate the ex-

Rousseau's *The Social Contract*: "Those who know Calvin only as a theologian much underestimate the extent of his genius. The codification of his wise edicts, in which he played a large part, does him no less honor than his *Institutes*. Whatever revolution time may bring in our religion, so long as the spirit of patriotism and liberty still lives among us, the memory of this great man will be forever blessed."

In his essay on beauty and Aesthetics, Bavinck confirmed his ability to deal with just about any issue on a philosophical level by rooting his conclusions on the place of beauty, in society, in his understanding of unity in diversity. "Beauty is not the good (viz. God Himself)," he wrote, "but is rather a 'divine gift...[that] also must be loved by us (259)." Bavinck offered two thoughts concerning the proper place of aesthetics in a Christian world and life view. In the first place he explained, "beauty does not have its own content, and because it deals with appearance and observation, it is tied more to the luxury of life than to the true and the good (259)." "Art cannot replace worship, nor can the theatre replace church...Beauty can prophecy about the Promised Land and can give us a glimpse from a distance...but it is only religion, reconciliation, and peace with God that ushers us into the Canaan of peace (259)." He immediately went on to acknowledge, however, the rightful place of art in society. "We should be truly sympathetic," he wrote, "(even though there are harmful exaggerations) if, as a reaction to intellectualism in education and nurture, 'aesthetic culture' again has a modest place and if vocational training is again used for the renewal of artful crafts (260)."

One of the greatest strengths of this work is found in Bavinck's analytical ability and logical reasoning. This is demonstrated in perhaps no better place than in his essay on "Christian Principles and Social Relationships." Bavinck took the time to consider the relationship between Christ and culture in light of the social and political situation in the Netherlands in the later part of the 19th Century. The discussion, popularized by Richard Niebuhr in America in the middle of the 20th Century, had already surfaced in the Netherlands on account of the political revolution (i.e. the 1848 release of the new liberal constitution). Bavinck skillfully set out the various options concerning the work of Christ in society. The first group he mentioned were those who said that Christianity was "born from the social needs of the time...After all, [they say] all spiritual ideas

tent of his genius. The codification of his wise edicts, in which he played a large part, does him no less honor than his *Institutes*. Whatever revolution time may bring in our religion, so long as the spirit of patriotism and liberty still lives among us, the memory of this great man will be forever blessed. (Rousseau, *Social Contract*, book II, Chapter 7, note) (n159)."

and powers in state and church, religion and society, science and art are caused ultimately and fundamentally by social conditions in the manner in which material goods are produced and distributed (119).” The theological rationale behind this view was the notion that “social conditions in the days in which Jesus was born were very distressing. They aroused in His soul a deep concern and a great measure of compassion. The gospel that he came to bring was therefore a Gospel for the poor (119).”

Following this synopsis of the social gospel, Bavinck set out the position of those offering a reaction to this view. “Over against these proponents of a social and socialistic Christianity,” he wrote, “are others who believe the very opposite: that the Christian religion has nothing to do with society and the state, and that it has no message for either (120).” As was true of the previous position, proponents of this “Christ verse culture” view have a theological reason for their belief. The manner in which Bavinck outlined their argumentation is noteworthy:

Jesus was a religious genius, to be sure, and answered to a high moral ideal, but the interests of society did not concern Him in the least, nor did He have anything to do with the state, just as He was totally indifferent to all of culture. Religion and morality are on the one side, and society, state and culture are on the other; each live in their own lives and follow their own course. Religion’s place is in the heart, the inner chamber, the church; but politics and the economy go their own way and, as such, have nothing to do with religion (120).

Bavinck ultimately answered the question of Christ and culture by acknowledging the all pervasive nature of the Gospel without falling into the trap of politicizing or socializing the message of the cross. It is the ethical nature of the Gospel that provides the theological foundation of this view. Bavinck concluded the essay with this profound statement:

So that everything may revive and may become again what it ought to be and can be, the Gospel tests all things—all circumstances and relationships—against the will of God, just as in the days of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles. It considers everything from a moral point of view, from the angle in which all those circumstances and relationships are connected with moral principles that God has instituted for all of life. Precisely because the Gospel only opposes sin, it opposes it only and everywhere in the heart and in the head, in the eye and in the hand, in family and in society, in science and art, in government and subjects, in rich and poor, for all sin is unrighteousness, trespassing of God’s law, and corruption of nature. But by liberating all social circumstances and relationships from sin, the Gospel

tries to restore them all according to the will of God and make them fulfill their own nature (143).

In conclusion, anyone who comes to this volume seeking an application of Christian theism to the multifaceted spheres of society will not be disappointed in the least. Bavinck's ability to intellectually stimulate is coupled with his unwavering commitment to the word of God and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a focus on the redemptive nature of revelation with regard to each of the subject addressed. Whether it is beauty, or politics, culture or religion, the value of this work will prove to be a far reaching and long lasting blessing for the church of God.

Nicholas T. Batzig, Christ the King (PCA), Philadelphia

Dictionary of Mission Theology, Evangelical Foundations: An Overview

John Corrie (ed.)

IVP: Nottingham, 2007; 461pp., £24.99; ISBN 978-1-184474-213-4

With the starting-point that world Christianity and its related mission are going through unparalleled change and that the centre of gravity is shifting further 'south', the Dictionary's stance is that Evangelicals must listen to and share one another's contextual perspectives whilst not compromising foundational truths.

It seeks to fulfil this goal through three supportive aims: the integration of theology and mission, the contextualization of theology and mission, and the evangelical foundations of theology and mission. The integration of the first aim involves "creative theological and missiological thinking" – contributors were asked to be original. The growth of 'Majority World' Christianity has "lifted contextualization up the theological agenda" and, in line with this, the second aim provides a 'majority contribution from the Majority World' – 60% of the 160 articles. The third aim offers an evangelical missiology which has its roots in "cherished and recognised evangelical categories", but which also seeks to "move evangelical mission thinking on beyond those categories". It asserts "respect for the priority of the biblical text as the authoritative source of theological and missiological thinking ... and an affirmation of the centrality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ ..." It also incorporates newer areas like dialogue, humanity within a more developed creation theology, liberation as a category of salvation, reconciliation, social justice and political engagement.

This is not a dictionary of particular mission personalities and societies, but of the theology and apologetics of mission, "with a careful use of

biblical material that articulates how the Bible provides a rich resource for mission thinking and how fresh contemporary approaches can yield new insights that remain faithful to the biblical witness as a whole.”

The Dictionary is directed to church leaders, missionaries, students of mission, those involved worldwide in “any and every context in which mission is learnt and practised” and a non-specialist readership. The editors expect its articles to provide the basis for discussion groups and seminars in many different contexts.

Each of the Aims binds mission with theology, but to what extent are the vital theological aims achieved? As the Introduction indicates, culture and contextualization is a dominant theme, appearing in a range of articles such as Accommodation, African Christology, African Theology, Asian Theology, Contextualization, Culture, Folk Religion, Globalization, Inculturation, Indian Theology, Latin American Theology, Minjung Theology, Prosperity Theology, and Youth Culture. Within them there is considerable overlap of thought. In approaching the cultural issue a highly selective quotation from Karl Barth is pertinent, that God is “not the patron saint of culture, but its judge”. In keeping with this, there are contributors, who, whilst pointing to the need to express the Christian faith in the idiom and thought forms of different peoples, stress the dangers of prioritizing culture over faithfulness to Scripture and of syncretism.

Those who like precise, distinctive theological thought will not always find it in the Dictionary. The article on Hell, to select an obvious test, is more a summary of views on the subject than a doctrinal statement. Universalism rejects universal general salvation whilst stating that it may have some pastoral relevance. Salvation: “Whilst agreeing on the uniqueness and unsurpassability of Jesus’ salvific claims, Christian theological responses to other religions’ salvific claims cannot be merely dismissive, and can only remain agnostic as to their eternal value.” Readers will want to consult more specific works on matters like the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation and Prophecy.

The dictionary is superbly presented with an Index of Subjects and of Articles. It is a useful compendium of diverse subjects of which many are unusual, eg, Ancestors, Magic, Shamanism. It is likely to be of most value to missiologists.

Ernest Brown, Belfast

Alexander Boddy: Pentecostal Anglican Pioneer

Gavin Wakefield

Paternoster: Milton Keynes, 2007; 245pp., £17; ISBN 97818422273463 and 18422273469

Gavin Wakefield, the Deputy Warden and Director of Mission and Pastoral Studies at Cranmer Hall in Durham, begins this study with two assertions. He informs us, first, that the modern Pentecostal Movement in Great Britain began in September 1907 in Sunderland and, secondly, that the ‘energetic father’ and ‘key leader’ of the movement was Alexander Boddy, one time Vicar of All Saints Church, Monkwearmouth. In the pages that follow we are introduced to the man and his ministry.

The first four chapters focus on Boddy’s childhood in Manchester (he was born in 1854), his work as an assistant solicitor (1876-88), and the early years of his ministry within the Church of England (he was ordained by Bishop J B Lightfoot in 1880). Intriguingly, we discover that although in 1876 he described himself as “converted to God” (p19) by 1892 he came to a realization that he “was not truly and experimentally ‘Born from Above’” (p69). Two events took place that year which dramatically altered the character of his ministry. The first was a spiritual experience of the personal appropriation of justification by faith. Prior to it, his testimony was “I could not honestly say ... that I knew my sins were forgiven, though in a way, I did seek to preach Christ”. After it, he was able to say, “I arose with full assurance that my sins were forgiven... I now had a real message to give”. The second was of being overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit. This event, one of seven such occasions when he felt the presence of God in a very marked way (p 83), occurred on 21 September at about 8.40am. It was followed by other experiences, most notable of which were his wife being healed of asthma and the discovery, in 1899, that she had a gift of healing.

In chapter 5 Wakefield charts how the Pentecostal movement in Great Britain began in Sunderland. He mentions the impact of the Welsh Revival of 1904 and the influence of events on Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906 as well as those in Oslo during the early months of 1907. More significantly, he asserts that a major reason the Pentecostal movement began in Britain was due to “Boddy’s own spiritual quest and leadership” (p 95).

Chapters 6-8 provide an analysis of Boddy as a leader. As well as charting his travels and the essential features of his ministry, Wakefield demonstrates that “Boddy was primarily a pastor who desired to help people encounter God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit” (p. 156). He shows that Boddy was “very conscious of the way in which the

Pentecostal experience broke down barriers... of gender, denomination, social class, nationality and skin colour" (p 122). He articulates Boddy's "view that there were three events that God had for people, namely regeneration, sanctification and baptism in the Spirit" (p 162). And he asserts that Boddy was definite in his belief that speaking in tongues "was a necessary gift as the initial sign or seal of baptism with the Holy Ghost, but with two caveats; first, a subsequent manifestation of love was more important than continuing to speak in tongues... and second, he was unwilling to unchurch sincere believers who had not had this experience" (p 168). Chapter 9 describes Boddy's later years, whilst in the Epilogue Wakefield endeavours to assess his ministry and legacy.

The author provides an accessible and readable biography, one that students of modern pentecostalism and allied charismatic movements will find of interest. Wakefield's account is primarily descriptive rather than analytical. Tom Wright, in the Foreword, acknowledges that Boddy's ministry and theology raise questions, both doctrinal and practical, which are not answered. Without a careful and thorough biblical critique of them, the danger is that it will be assumed, possibly too readily by some, that the events of 1907 and over the years that followed were indeed fresh experiences and new movements of God's Spirit. At least some of the claims made by Boddy, as summarised above, are not endorsed by evangelical and reformed Christians.

George Curry, Elswick Parish Church, Newcastle upon Tyne

The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement

Derek Tidball, David Hilborn and Justin Thacker (eds.)

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008; 360pp., £6.99; ISBN 978-0310273394

The Atonement Debate contains reworked papers given at the joint Evangelical Alliance and London School of Theology 2005 symposium on the atonement. As Derek Tidball explains in the preface, all of the contributors were unified over the following convictions: that Jesus' death is crucial to Christian faith, that the New Testament's witness to the meaning and significance of this death is variegated, and that the message of the cross must be communicated in ways that make it meaningful to contemporary culture. However, there was no unanimity on how and why Christ's death was salvific nor was their agreement on whether penal substitution (PS) should be the exclusive model for understanding Jesus' death or whether it should be totally abandoned.

The introductory section begins with a chapter by David Hilborn in which he sets the book in the context of the atonement debate in British

evangelicalism. The debate seems to have come to a head in the fundamental denial of PS in Steve Chalke and Alan Mann's 2003 book, *The Lost Message of Jesus*. This denial did not sit well with many evangelicals since 'penal substitution has widely been regarded as the "controlling model" within mainline evangelicalism – the sine qua non of evangelical soteriology' (p19). It was the ensuing debate that prompted the LST 2005 symposium. In chapter two Steve Chalke lays out his opposition to PS. Chalke asks some good questions about the implications of PS for God and mission. In the end, he argues that Jesus' death was substitutionary, but it was by no means a penal substitutionary death. Most of this chapter was greatly disappointing. It is full of uncritical proof-texting, sloppy logic, misleading statements, and theological unsophistication in the extreme. My criticisms here have nothing at all to do with whether I agree with Chalke on the atonement.

The next section, 'Biblical Foundations', begins with I.H. Marshall's account of 'The Theology of the Atonement.' Marshall argues that PS is supported by Scripture and is central to the Christian faith despite recent challenges against it. The Biblical fact that God does have wrath and will judge sinful humanity does not lead to the conclusion that God has unwieldy human emotions. Marshall's strongest case is made on the basis of Rom 3:25-26 and Gal 3:13. In chapter four Christopher Wright provides an interesting "sketch" of various aspects of atonement in the Old Testament. What is striking is that sacrifice is not always the means of atonement in the Old Testament (cf. Genesis and the Psalms) and thus "atonement" is a larger concept than sacrifice. Chapter five focuses on the atonement in the New Testament. Here, Geoffrey Grogan sees PS throughout the New Testament and argues that we do not have to choose between PS, participatory representation and Christus Victor interpretations of the cross since the New Testament bears witness to all of these.

Despite Sue Groom's main title of chapter six ('Why did Christ Die?'), the piece is almost completely about the servant's death in Isa 52–53 with only about 1¼ pages addressing Isa 53 in the New Testament. Groom settles on an "inclusive place-taking" (taken from the German *Inklusierende* [not *Inkludierende*] *Stellvertretung*) (p103) model in which Christ, uniquely as a human being, incorporates humanity as its representative and suffers on behalf of humanity. In chapter seven Rohintan Mody argues that PS is present in Rom 3:25-26 and is at the heart of Paul's gospel. He opts for an exclusive and an inclusive view of Christ's death, but an important distinction must be maintained here: Christ inclusively represents humanity on the cross but exclusively bears the penalty for sin in our place. In his discussion of *hilasterion* in Rom 3:25 Mody mentions Dan Bailey's important 1999 Cambridge Ph.D. thesis ("Jesus as the Mercy Seat") but

does not take it into consideration since he relies solely on Leon Morris' linguistic evidence. Chapter eight is Steven Motyer's hermeneutically informed assessment of the atonement in Hebrews. He attempts to show "that penal substitution does not provide a useful summary of Hebrews' teaching about the atonement..." (p136). Motyer insists, and rightly so, that we recognise that the author of Hebrews' is looking back to the Old Testament's sacrificial cult in the light of the revelation in Jesus and not simply taking it over as it stands. One of the striking differences between the Old Testament and Hebrews is that the goal of OT religion was never to provide access to the Most Holy Place, whereas in Hebrews the goal of atonement is precisely that: to enable believers to enter into the presence of God.

The next section, 'Theological Foundations', begins with Joel Green's contribution in which he is concerned to show that the model of PS is "wanting" (p154). He starts off with a crucial observation: that Jesus' death effects salvation is clearly central to the church's ancient rule of faith but the question of how Jesus' death is salvific is not provided in the rule of faith or the early creeds. Green emphasises that the model of PS often divorces Jesus' death from its context on the incarnation, life and ministry of Jesus. In chapter ten Garry Williams sets out to defend PS against recent criticisms, namely, that it is based on a false view of God and the trinity, that it assumes western individualism, that it encourages doctrinal isolationism (it down plays Jesus' life) and that it is a type of "cosmic child abuse." Williams concludes that PS is the central atonement model that holds all others together. Sadly, he concludes by strongly implying that those who disagree with PS cannot remain in fellowship with those who hold to it because the theological issues at stake are too central. As the title of chapter eleven suggests, Graham McFarlane sets the atonement in the wider context of the doctrine of creation and the triune God. As the fall was fundamentally a relational breakdown, so redemption must restore the relationship between Creator and the human creature. God does so by sending his Son who uniquely identifies with us in his humanity and substitutes for us. The atonement effects individual forgiveness but also "reorders" creation itself. In a very fascinating essay (chapter twelve), Oliver Crisp raises questions about the "internal logic" of traditional arguments for PS. On what basis is guilt transferable from the sin and guilt party to the non-guilty party? In chapter thirteen David Williams argues that to restrict the atonement to PS alone is a mistake because "atonement" is a broader concept than just Christ taking punishment in our stead. The "model" that he offers is one that relates the atonement and salvation to Christ's threefold office of prophet, priest and king.

The section, 'Historical Perspectives', begins with Tony Lane's description of Bernard of Clairvaux's theological genius by outlining how he viewed the cross in more than one way: Christ as second Adam, Christ as moral influence, Christ's death as the defeat of Satan and death and Christ's bearing the punishment we deserved. Bernard does not fall prey to some contemporary criticisms of PS. In chapter fifteen Stephen Holmes offers an instructive account of the history of atonement thinking in British evangelicalism from the eighteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. Perhaps surprisingly, the atonement is usually understood in substitutionary terms but not always in penal categories. I cannot however understand Holmes' insistence that the new perspective on Paul necessarily rules out penal substitution (p.280). In chapter sixteen Ian Randall looks at the relationship between the theology of the atonement and spirituality in British evangelical by considering figures such as Wesley, Spurgeon, L. Morris, J.I. Packer and I.H. Marshall.

The last section, 'Contemporary Perspectives', contains the following three chapters. Lynette Mullings takes her cue from Chalke and Mann's view that Jesus' salvific work must not be limited to the cross event only but encompasses Jesus' life as well (chapter seventeen). She then examines a number of "womanist" thinkers who likewise emphasise Jesus' life as the transformative potential for spirituality and social change. Anna Robbins offers an intriguing proposal for understanding the atonement in postmodern culture, one which does not simply dissolve into postmodernity but nevertheless speaks in ways that may be more understandable in our present western historical and cultural location. Robbins uses Jean Baudrillard's understanding of "symbolic exchange" to aid in her attempt to communicate to postmodern sensibilities. In the last chapter (nineteen) Derek Tidball asks the question, is the penal substitutionary model of the atonement pastorally justifiable? He responds by tackling some of the dominant criticisms of the model and showing how these criticisms are caricatures and simply false.

Although the book reads like conference papers (which it is!) rather than a coherent book, it nevertheless provides the reader with some of the ways in which key evangelical thinkers understand the atonement today. This in itself is worth the price of the book. The debate about the how of the atonement will surely continue and this book is a great place to begin to understand the issues involved.

John Dennis, International Christian College, Glasgow

Reformed Dogmatics: Volume Four - Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation

Herman Bavinck (translated by John Vriend)

Baker Academic: Grand Rapids; 2008; 944pp; \$49.99; ISBN 9780801026577, 0801026571

This year marks the completed English translation of the fourth and final Volume of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*. Previously, Bavinck has dealt with his prolegomena, followed by God, creation, sin and salvation in Christ. Now, he draws his magnum opus to a close in describing the Holy Spirit's work in redeeming and restoring both church and cosmos. With grace finally restoring nature, the Triune glory of God will be eternally manifested as he comes to dwell among his chosen people, in his chosen place.

John Bolt, the editor of this translation, deserves credit. His helpful introductory essay sets Bavinck's life and work within an historical context, which leads the reader directly into Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation.

As an overall work, *Reformed Dogmatics* has a strongly Trinitarian theme. The previous three Volumes have emphasised that God creates and the Son redeems. Now, Bavinck focuses on the Spirit's role in applying the Son's work. Writing in three sections, he first focuses on the Holy Spirit's role in individual regeneration. Here, in 'The Spirit Gives New Life to Believers', Bavinck provides a veritable tour de force of individual soteriology. His typical style is clear-headed and erudite in equal measure; both are used to great effect in outlining calling and regeneration, faith, conversion, justification, sanctification and perseverance. His discussion of imputation also highlights Bavinck's ongoing relevance to current theological debate.

The second section deals with the Spirit's work in corporate soteriology: 'The Spirit Creates New Community'. Bavinck's handling of ecclesiology is largely Spirit-focused. He deals with the Church's essence, government and power in direct relation to the Spirit. Such a spiritual approach to ecclesiology is far from esoteric. Indeed, Bavinck works through the classic practical debates regarding church government: bishops and elders, hierarchy, the papacy and so on. The correlation between Bavinck's doctrines of God and the church – as organic, rather than mechanical, entities characterised by simultaneous unity and diversity – is highly sophisticated and noteworthy.

His third and final section, 'The Spirit Makes All Things New' – which has been available as an English translation entitled *The Last Things: Hope for this World and the Next* since 1996 – outlines Bavinck's vision for the

fulfilment of God's gospel purposes in the cosmos. He first examines individual eschatology, establishing the reality of life after death and offering a thoroughly Christian perspective on the afterlife. His engagement with Islamic and Buddhist theologies of the afterlife is interesting. As he progresses to discuss ecclesiastical and cosmic eschatology, his writings – perhaps typically of his context and era – have a decidedly amillennial flavour. His amillennialism is a mix of gritty realism (regarding the struggles of the pilgrim church) and cautious optimism (that God may call many more to himself prior to Christ's return). He is not a Zionist and, as such does not believe in the conversion of a literal nation of Israel. However, he leaves open the possibility that prior to the eschaton, the number of believing Jews will be considerably higher than at present. A consistently accurate presentation of competing positions is typical of Bavinck. However, in discussing 'The Wideness of God's Mercy' he attributes a belief in the ultimate salvation of the majority of humankind exclusively to legalists (Socinians and Pelagians) and universalists. Disappointingly, he fails to discuss the possibility that postmillennialism may also facilitate such a position.

In producing an accurate English translation of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, the Dutch Reformed Translation Society has provided a great gift to the Anglophone world: a standardised, comprehensive, readable translation of Bavinck's magnum opus.

James Eglinton, New College, University of Edinburgh

The Barth Lectures

Colin E. Gunton; Transcribed and Edited by Paul H. Brazier
T&T Clark, London/New York, 2007; xxiv+285pp., £24.99pb;
ISBN 9 780567 031402

While Colin Gunton fruitfully enjoyed a life-long engagement with, and formation by, Karl Barth's work, produced numerous articles on various aspects of such, and lectured on the Swiss giant during most of the years he taught at King's College London, he never fulfilled his ambition to pen a monograph devoted solely to this his favourite theologian. Had he done so, these lectures (recorded and transcribed almost verbatim by Paul Brazier, complete with charts, diagrams, live-questions and Gunton's responses) would have served as the basis.

Chapters 1–3 attend to the intellectual, historical and theological background to Barth's thinking. Beginning with a focus on Enlightenment philosophy as it finds voice in Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel – all three of whom 'identified Christianity too closely with modern culture' (p17) – Gunton then turns to Barth's early theological formation in the nine-

teenth-century liberalism of Harnack and Herrmann, as well as to some other voices and ideas that impinged on Barth's theological development – Blumhardt (who also influenced Moltmann), Schweitzer, and Overbeck, through whom eschatology was re-confirmed on the theological radar. Barth's engagement with existentialism (Kierkegaardian and other) and theologies of 'religion', 'crisis' and 'dialectics' are introduced in the second and third lectures, and re-appear subsequently throughout the book. Certainly, for the Swiss theologian, 'no road to the eternal world has ever existed except the road of negation' (p33). Thus when Gunton later comes to unpack something of the charge concerning Barth's 'irrationality' through the continuing influence of *Der Römerbrief*, empiricism, and Barth's 'assertive style', the United Reformed Church minister notes:

The influence of empiricism, especially on the minds of English and American theologians, cannot be dismissed. The English, or to be more pertinent, the Anglican theological mind is shaped by a philosophical tradition that does not find Barth's approach to theology easy to understand let alone agree with ... Part of our intellectual tradition makes it hard for us to understand – particularly an Anglican tradition. Anglicans on the whole like things to be nice and middle way, the *via media*. And there is not much of the middle way in Karl Barth! ... Barth's assertive style does make it difficult for mild-mannered establishment Anglicans to cope with. (p66)

Whether critiquing Augustine, Calvin, Kant, the 'Absolutely Pagan' Hegel (p17), or the 'great opponent' Schleiermacher (p15), Gunton repeatedly identifies that the crucial question for the author of the groundbreaking *Der Römerbrief* remains 'how much of your intellectual method hangs on something foreign to Christianity?' (p. 42; cf. pp. 52–3). To this end, Gunton also devotes an entire lecture (pp53–63) to Barth's 1931 work on Anselm, *Fides quaerens intellectum*, and to the Archbishop's understanding of the relationship between 'proof', 'reason' and 'faith'. He later writes: 'Barth is a post-Reformation thinker with the rallying cry, by scripture alone and by faith alone! Barth found in the Reformation tradition a conception of theology based on a view of God that is linked with human salvation. The problem for Barth with the Scholastic tradition is that they begin with a rational view of God – a rational idea of God abstracted from human salvation. Barth begins with scripture because the God of scripture is about salvation not philosophical argument' (p69). And on a comparison with Schleiermacher: 'the problem with beginning with religion is that it is not theological, it can be, it can lead into theology, but in essence it is not: religion is an experiential concept, not a theological concept. Barth wants a theology that is theological right from the very outset. Barth considers that Roman Catholics and Protes-

tants such as Schleiermacher are wrong in thinking that there can be a non-theological basis for theology. Barth is a theologian you see, to the fingernails' (p69).

From Chapter 4 onwards, Gunton turns to Barth's Church Dogmatics, acutely aware that 'there is nothing as boring as résumés of Barth's Dogmatics' and that 'the way to get into Barth is to select and to read – read him, there is no substitute!' (p71). Over the next 190 pages, this is precisely what Gunton masterfully helps us do; whether on Barth's theological prolegomena, his witness to the three-fold Word, Trinity, the doctrine of God proper, election, christology, soteriology, ethics or creation, we are all along driven by the only thing of theological interest for Barth, the question 'Who is the God who makes himself known in Scripture?' (p77). 'When Barth is at his best', Gunton writes, 'he looks at the biblical evidence in detail; when he is weak he tends to evade it' (p119).

Throughout, Gunton is rousing his 30–40 mostly MA and PhD students (although the lectures were intended for undergraduates and so leave considerable ground un-traversed and engage minimally with secondary literature) to 'read as much of the man himself' not least because 'the people that write about him are much more boring than he is' (p9; cf. p39). In a sense, this is one book to 'listen to' more than to 'read'. At times, it is a bit like the difference between a live album and a studio version. Not all the notes are spot on, but the energy – filled with a depth of theological and pastoral insight that betray years of wrestling with the things that matter – is all there.

Such wrestling means that whether expounding a key motif in Barth's theology or fielding questions, Gunton reveals not only a deep indebtedness to Barth's thought, but also points of divergence. He is upfront in the first lecture:

Not everyone buys into Barth ... I don't, all the way along the line, as I get older I get more and more dissatisfied with the details of his working out of the faith ... over the years I think I have developed a reasonable view of this great man who is thoroughly exciting and particularly, I can guarantee, if you do this course, that you will be a better theologian by the third year, whether or not you agree with him – he is a great man to learn to think theologically with. (p10)

Clearly, Gunton is no clone of Barth. Though they are mostly unnamed, he draws upon Coleridge, Owen, Zizioulas and Polanyi as allies in order to attain a measure of distance from Barth's theology (and that of Barth's student Moltmann), notably on creation, trinitarian personhood (Gunton prefers the Cappadocians), natural revelation, Jesus' humanity, Christ's

priesthood, the Word's action as mediator of creation, ecclesiology, and an over-realised eschatology, among other things. Gunton reserves his strongest criticisms for what he contends is Barth's weak pneumatology (for which he blames Augustine and the filioque): there is 'not enough of the Spirit accompanying and empowering Jesus at different stages of his ministry' (p200). Again: 'the second person of the Trinity is made to do a bit more than he does in Scripture' (p212). However, Gunton is always cautious and respectful: Barth 'never really forgets anything, he is too good a theologian for that. And when you are criticizing Barth it is only a question of where he puts a weight; he never forgets anything, he is too good a man for that' (p171). Even on the Spirit, Gunton suggests that he can only be critical here because of what he has learnt from Barth already: 'That's the great thing about Barth: he enables you to do other things that aren't just Barth but yet are empowered by him. Yes, that's his greatness' (p200).

While the reformed theologian is 'too-multi-layered a thinker to have one leading idea' if there is one, Gunton suggests it is that of covenant: 'that from eternity God covenants to be the God who elects human beings into relation with himself' (p149), that from eternity the triune God is oriented towards us. Gunton's chapter on Barth's revision of God's election in CD II/2 is an astounding example of his adroitness and élan as a theological educator. Not many teachers could summarise so sufficiently and with such economy (just 12 pages!) what for Barth is the root of all things, 'creation, atonement, all' (p115), that is, election. Gunton concludes by suggesting that Barth's effort was 'a huge improvement in the crude determinism of the Augustinian tradition, which did not represent a gracious God. The Augustinian doctrine replaces grace with gratuity: God gratuitously chooses group A and not group B – this is not the God who seeks out the lost [even Judas] and does not reject them' (p121).

This volume is significantly more than merely a course on the theology of the twentieth century's superlative theologian. It is also a reminder that to read Barth attentively is to be introduced to a broader dogmatic and philosophical tradition. Moreover, it is to be led to do so by one of Britain's ablest pedagogues. A foreword by Christoph Schwöbel and a warm introduction by Steve Holmes prepare us for one of the freshest introductions to Barth available. Again, we are placed in Professor Gunton's debt.

Jason A. Goroncy, University of St Andrews

An American Augustinian: Sin and Salvation in the Dogmatic Theology of William G. T. Shedd

Oliver D. Crisp

Paternoster, Bletchley, Milton Keynes; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007; 183pp., £19.99; ISBN 9781842275269

This is perhaps the first published monograph completely devoted to Shedd's writings. William G. T. Shedd (1820-1894) has remained in obscurity for years and we now have our first real serious study on such an important theologian. Oliver Crisp did not merely regurgitate Shedd's thinking, but instead has probed deeply into Shedd's reflections on anthropology, hamartiology, Christology, and the nature of atonement. The introduction gives a very helpful biographical sketch of Shedd while also conveying the goal of the book. Crisp has managed to pull together all the known sources on Shedd's life into one brief essay. It could serve as an excellent entry in any standard biographical dictionaries.

The first chapter unpacks Shedd's traducianism and scrutinizes his theory in the light of modern reflections. How does the soul propagate? Is it fissiparous or does it propagate in accordance with the hylomorphist view of Odo of Tournai? Does the soul divide or reproduce? Crisp offers what he calls a "metaphysical hybrid" to Shedd's answer. His wide reading on this subject enables him to explore this topic beyond traditional ways.

Realism and imputation of Adam's sin are addressed in the second chapter. He considers the problems associated with the transmission of original sin. Three theologians are used as test cases, Shedd, Augustus Strong (another realist) and Charles Hodge (representationalist or federalist). Crisp examines the questions of injustice (Why am I punished for the sins of Adam?) and plausibility (Is there any plausible way to justify making me guilty of Adam's sin?). Though realism seems to give some good answers to these questions, Crisp helps us to see what kind of realism is involved here. He gives two versions of realism, the "common nature view" and the "unindividualized version." Crisp seems to favor the former which teaches that each individual shares a common fallen human nature. One can hardly reflect on these issues without having to interact with Crisp's observations.

"The Theanthropic Person of Christ" is the subject of the third chapter. The nature of the hypostatic union is carefully scrutinized (e.g., anhypostasia-enhypostasia), and Crisp's clear understanding of Shedd's Christology comes to the fore. However, he raised the problem of divine simplicity in Shedd's christological formulation and tries to explain Shedd's position on this question. But this "problem" or difficulty exists

in the very nature of the Christian understanding of the incarnation, and it is not a unique problem to Shedd. On the other hand, Crisp gives a very insightful criticism against Shedd's realism and its implications on Christology (i.e., Shedd argued that Christ's human nature needed to be sanctified before it could be assumed).

Crisp tackles the impeccability of Christ in the fourth chapter. He fills in some of the gaps in Shedd's reasoning and among the several issues related to this topic, he ponders the difficult problem of how any temptation could be innocent. This question is infrequently asked in theological writings and Crisp's clear and cogent reasoning helps the reader steer through this conundrum.

The important doctrines of atonement and federalism are evaluated in the fifth chapter. Crisp wonders why Shedd was not a consistent realist, that is, why Shedd held to a realistic union when it came to Adam but a federal headship when it came to Christ. He suggests that a consistent realistic position may be possible, though he does not seem to commit himself to this alternative.

In the sixth chapter, after developing Shedd's doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement, Crisp seeks to answer Vincent Brümmer's general criticisms against penal substitution from Shedd's perspective. It is refreshing to see how relevant Shedd is in the light of Brümmer's recent theories. I think he has persuasively answered Brümmer.

Crisp's seventh and final chapter unpacks Shedd's formulation of the extent of atonement and his theory of the 'Larger Hope'. This is the only chapter in which Crisp analyzes Shedd strictly in theological terms. Though Crisp's reflections are insightful, other writers have previously covered them in greater depth. He does suggest that Shedd's theory of the pagans who have never heard the gospel is remarkably similar to Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christian." But more should have been done to show the differences between the two.

Overall, the book is very demanding and stimulating. It is not your typical theological volume, since Crisp brings various philosophical issues to the table in conversation with Shedd. He skillfully uses philosophy to unlock the thorny issues raised in Shedd's writings. In a sense, this book is not so much about William G. T. Shedd as it is about probing important theological issues using Shedd as the test case. Oliver Crisp does not rehearse a nineteenth-century theologian's thought to introduce him to modern readers but instead enables Shedd to interact with contemporary theological and philosophical scholarship. I did not necessarily come away from this monograph wanting to read more of Shedd as much as wanting to delve more deeply into the theological doctrines raised in this book. Crisp has done an admirable job in keeping the theological dialogue

alive with Shedd. Crisp wanted to show the relevance of Shedd's writings in our modern context, and I am convinced he has succeeded. No one will now be able to write on Shedd without seriously interacting with Crisp's study. Not all readers will feel Shedd has succeeded in answering some of the questions raised, but Crisp has shown that Shedd's deep reflections are worth considering.

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Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans

David J. Southall

Mohr Siebeck, Tubingen, Germany, 2008; 357pp., \$137.50; ISBN 9783161495366

This book is a revision of David J. Southall's doctoral dissertation at Spurgeon's College, London. His motivation stems from a class on the book of Romans he took in seminary in which he was exposed to New Perspective on Paul (NPP) ideas and righteousness language. However, one of the major reasons for the book is that Southall believes that the NPP's interpretation of righteousness is too narrow because personification and metaphor in Paul's writings are not properly evaluated. Southall's thesis is that when righteousness is used within pericopes that clearly display metaphor and narrative, righteousness is used in a personified way. This personified righteousness undergoes character invention and functions as Christ would in other passages. Southall argues that Romans 6:15-23 and Romans 9:30-10:21 are clear examples where Paul uses righteousness in this way.

In part one, Southall begins by reviewing and critiquing the NPP's use of righteousness language. Southall does not deny the dynamic, relational, covenantal approach but he argues that righteous is not always used in this way. He uses James Dunn as a representative of NPP's thought and a point of departure for his study. Southall shows that the NPP's method and exegesis fails to account for the range of interpretation for righteousness found in the Hebrew Scriptures and concludes that the reason the NPP's fails to see this is due to their understanding of the function of language. This is important to understand because Southall's project is based largely upon modern literary theories, especially the work of Paul Ricoeur.

Next, Southall discusses metaphor and narrative, generally, and how interpretation of Paul's writings must account for such elements. He concludes that the use of Ricoeur's idea of a root metaphor system is highly important for his project. Metaphor, he seeks to prove, leads to semantic innovation. This is why righteousness within narrative and metaphor can

act in a personified way. Southall goes on to show the importance of understanding Paul's writing as narrative, aligning himself with Richard Hays at this point. Paul's narratival writings revolve around the faithfulness of Christ. Southall narrows his project to search for this story within in Romans where personified righteousness occurs.

In part two, Southall examines metaphor, narrative, and the personification of righteousness in Romans 6:15-23. After establishing the presence of these elements, he then provides his exegetical findings for this passage. He concludes that the pericope allows for "righteousness" to function as a personified slave master connoting Christ. In part 3, the same work is done for Romans 9:30-10:21 with very similar conclusions. Southall then seeks to examine the use of righteousness in other Pauline writings.

This book should be commended for the thoroughness of the author's research. There do not seem to be many positions or problems that might counter his conclusions that he does not address. The book is formatted in a reader friendly way with section headings clearly marked and there are many short summary sections. However, the result of such thoroughness makes this a tedious read.

The results of Southall's work are stimulating. He helps interpreters to see elements within Paul's writings that do seem to have been overlooked in most scholarship, especially poetic, apocalyptic, and personified elements. However, one must question the legitimacy of basing a hermeneutic on a modern literary theory. Also, readers should be aware that although Southall critiques the NPP he is largely sympathetic to the position and concludes that his research supports the participationist view of salvation. This book will appeal to those interested in Pauline and NPP studies.

R. Jason Pickard, Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia

Metavista: Bible, Church, and Mission in an Age of Imagination

Colin Greene & Martin Robinson

Authentic Media, Bucks, 2008 278pp., ISBN 9781842275061

In an era where almost everything is up for debate, Colin Greene and Martin Robinson take an informative look into what appears to be the emerging coalescence of Biblical knowledge in a transitional society. With backgrounds in missions, theology, and cultural studies, Greene and Robinson draw attention to various historical patterns of both cultural engagement and disengagement. "Old ways of doing things either no longer seem appropriate or do not yield satisfactory results. Accordingly we pro-

pose a new way of doing mission which we call radical cultural engagement” (Introduction, xi). This book serves as an insightful companion for those seeking to understand the transitions Christianity has taken in light of our cultures sociological and economic trends.

Split into three parts this book unravels the ties that bind both modernity and postmodernity to our cultural engagement and societal structure. In part one the reader is carried through an overview of the history and backbone of the transition from modernity to postmodernity. The second part of the book takes a deeper look at the platform we are currently on and how we must adjust in order to reach and not lose our audience. The third part of the book looks forward with imagination as the focus. Understanding the continual state of transition we are in imagination and forward motion become necessary partners.

Unlike the multitude who have dismissed modernity, Greene and Robinson dissect its influence and turn our attention to its constant undertones, “...initially modernity and Christendom formed an alliance because each needed the other to survive” (p15). Drawing out the benefits and limitations within modernity we are able to track its leverage in economics, politics, science, and religious life.

Associated with the artistic avant-garde and literary circles in the 1950’s and 60’s we see the mainstream introduction of postmodernity. “It should never be forgotten that postmodernity, not unlike Romanticism, originated within the humanities as a new aesthetic that began to challenge previously accepted practices and procedures” (p26). Postmodernity ushered in the integration of the narrative to our every day lives. Greene and Robinson point out how we’ve even gone so far as to tailor our lives to be a personally aesthetically pleasing story. As postmodernism has infiltrated our lives a great shift has occurred, “In a postmodern society power no longer resides in old institutions such as the monarchy, the judiciary, the church, or, indeed, parliament. Just where power is actually institutionalized and maintained is not easy to discern, because the dispersal of power cites, as Foucault contended, is going on all the time” (p59). With the flux that postmodernity provides comes opportunities to revamp the way we engage our culture.

While doing a fantastic job at tracking the shift from modernity to postmodernity Greene and Robinson do not lose sight of the practical outworkings for the reader. Fleshing out their concept of radical cultural engagement, Greene and Robinson detail various things that stand in the way. Among this is the secular image and the often over-powering influence of the culture. Despite this large barrier, a vision of creativity is constructed as we are encouraged to imagine a missional community and

reimagine what it means to live a counter-cultural life with a hermeneutic to match.

From cover to cover this book does an excellent job of transitioning from where we've been, where we are, and how to get where we should be going. Greene and Robinson understand the struggles we are up against and provide a clear assessment and a creative solution.

Denise Malagari, Philadelphia, PA

The Divine Spiration of Scripture: Challenging Evangelical Perspectives

A.T.B. McGowan

Apollos (IVP), Nottingham, England, 2007; 229pp., £14.99; ISBN 978-1-84474-220-2

As a book about (in)Spiration, it is tempting to see this volume as merely as a contribution, from the Reformed perspective, to the ongoing debate on inerrancy and infallibility. However, the book claims to be, and is, more than that. It begins by advocating a relocation of the locus of scripture within the theological system. Then, in discussion of the qualities of scripture, it argues the case for, and proposes, a new vocabulary to replace the traditional terminology – a terminology which the author considers inadequate and misleading. It goes on to re-examine the connection between scripture and the church by, first, discussing the relationship between scripture and creed – which culminates in an argument for developing an evangelical theology of tradition – and, then, by providing some ideas on how scripture is to be preached in the life of the church.

As far as the relocation of scripture goes, the proposal is to shift the locus of scripture from its primary place in theological discussion and subsume it under the work of the Holy Spirit, as an aspect of God's revelation of himself. He recognises logical reasons for maintaining the status quo – in his introduction he says that 'what we believe about the scriptures determines what we believe about everything else.' (Indeed!) - but urges a strong theological reason for change, namely, the need to guard against the idea that God's word is somehow prior to himself and that it can function, as it were, on its own as a source of epistemological certainty apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. So, we should begin with God. Despite arguing his case well, it is hard to say that he succeeds.

First, it is not the doctrine of Scripture as such which really lies at the forefront of our theology but the doctrine of revelation – and where else can Man begin? Moral creation must begin with revelation – after all, is it not axiomatic that we can know nothing of God unless he chooses to reveal himself? In other words, to begin with revelation is, most em-

phatically, to begin with God – as the God who has, first and foremost, revealed himself.

Again – and bearing in mind that later in the book, in a discussion on creeds, the writer goes on to suggest the need for a constant revision of creeds to ensure their ongoing relevance – it seems strange that he should advocate a shift of locus for scripture in the historical era in which the sufficiency, perspicuity and authority of scripture is most challenged by those who claim a special revelation from the Holy Spirit!

More seriously, the emphasis on revelation as ‘encounter’; the distinction drawn between ‘revelation’ and the ‘record of revelation’ and the tendency, at least twice expressed, to put the preaching of the word in the same category of revelation as the ‘incarnation’ and ‘inscripturation’ of it – these are all, ultimately, damaging to a correct view of inspiration. For one thing, all revelation – even pictorial revelation – is designed to be propositional. There is really no need to draw any distinction between the prior revelation ‘event’ and the interpretive record of it – at least in terms of inspiration. Also, with respect to preaching as being the word of God, it is the word of God itself which is revelational – not, particularly, the preaching of it. It is as revelational to say ‘you must be born again’ in a conversation at the dinner table as it is in a pulpit. On the other hand, to say ‘I ate an apple last night’ in the pulpit is no more revelational than it is to say it at home. The distinctiveness of preaching lies elsewhere – not in the precise words spoken alone. It is, all in all, better to limit the revelation of God’s Word of God to incarnational and written forms – bearing in mind, of course, that what is written can also be spoken. To equate the proclamation, as we know and practice it, with the writing of scripture seems more likely to lower the view of the written word rather than exalt the view of the preached word.

As to the attempt to change the relevant terminology, aside from the sheer difficulty in effecting a change – traditional nomenclature is notoriously stubborn in all academic disciplines – the case made for new terminology is, with one exception, unsatisfactory. The exception is ‘Spiration’. The inadequacy of ‘inspiration’ has been long felt and ‘Spiration’, with or without the adjective ‘Divine’ – is undoubtedly a better alternative.

However, the emphasis on the work of the Spirit leads the writer to substitute ‘recognition’ for ‘illumination’ and ‘comprehension’ for ‘perspicuity’. In the first case, the author is really making the case for the outright rejection of the concept of illumination itself – understood, that is, as the illumination of the Scriptures, which he considers (rightly, in my view) to be unnecessary as distinct from the illumination of the human mind, which he (rightly) considers essential. However, by using the word ‘recognition’ there is a move from the Divine agency to the human

response. Would it not, therefore, have been better to drop the term altogether as an attribute of scripture and use it exclusively for the operation of the Spirit on the human mind? Again, in proposing the substitution of 'perspicuity' with 'comprehension' is the author not aware that he has substituted a quality in the reader for a quality belonging to the Bible? The real substitution should be with something like 'comprehensibility' – however, it is possible that this unconscious shift from a quality belonging to the Bible to one belonging to the reader was a mere Barthian slip! In any case, it is hard to see where the real improvement lies.

Least satisfactory of all is the rejection of 'inerrancy' in favour of 'infallibility' as the favoured term to convey the trustworthiness of the Bible. It is hard to see, precisely, what the author is trying to gain by doing so. 'Infallibility' is the traditional term used to designate the reliability of the Bible and conveys the truth that the Bible does not deceive. How can this attribute not be related to the other attribute at issue – that of inerrancy? After all, is it not a fair question to ask of the Bible which claims to be the word of the God who cannot lie - 'does the Bible always tell us the truth'? After many assurances from the writer that we can rest in knowing that we have just the kind of Bible God wanted us to have, the question still remains: is it true? The author is uncomfortable with the question and wishes that it would not be put in those terms, or that it would go away, but it is hard to see why it should.

Part of his difficulty seems to lie in the fact that, for him, the concept of inerrancy is entirely incompatible with the loss of the autographs and the resultant diversity of text. However, bearing in mind that, even if we adopt the conclusions of the most severe critic, 99% of the Bible remains undisputed as to verbal content (i.e. we have the exact words) and that, further, the dispute over most of what remains does not affect the basic unit of meaning (which is the clause, or sentence, and not the word) then do we not have warrant to say that our manuscripts are inerrant? That is, that they teach the truth and not lies?

However, the writer is unwilling to grant necessary inerrancy even to the autographs themselves – on the ground, it seems, that to do so would jeopardise the reality of the full humanity of the authors being involved in the process, reducing them to the level of machines. Here, the usual red herrings and straw men make their customary appearances as we are warned of the danger of the mechanistic notions of inspiration which seem to lurk on every corner when evangelical views of inerrancy are discussed. In fact, it is rare indeed to meet a believer in inerrancy who holds to a mechanical theory of inspiration. I, for one, have never met one. In any case, the true doctrine of inerrancy, if awesome, is yet marvellously straightforward: the God, who cannot lie, used the full and free processes

of the human mind as the means through which he delivered and recorded his message. We are at a loss to discover where the problem with this lies. Inherent in the doctrine of inspiration is a wonder, not a problem. On reflection, it is sometimes difficult to avoid the conclusion that the writer does not hold to inerrancy himself. He just finds it difficult to say so.

On scripture and creed, the author is concerned to justify the existence of a meaningfully confessional church while being equally concerned to safeguard the priority of scripture over the confession. After bemoaning the fracturing and resultant multiplicity of Protestant and Reformed churches as well as the ossified condition of many of our symbols, he suggests that a more satisfactory scripture-confession relationship would be attained by a frequent re-writing of confessions – to ensure ongoing relevance – as well as by the development of a Reformed Tradition. It is not at all clear, however, how this would be achieved and no suggestions are offered but an appeal is made for further thought. Neither is it clear, to this reviewer anyway, to what extent the Reformed churches are without one – it just hasn't been codified to date!

In a very useful, if brief, treatment of preaching, he leans heavily on Calvin to affirm that our preaching of God's word should be authoritative, expository, systematic and doctrinal.

The book is well constructed, well written and interesting to read. It contains a full bibliography and index of names.

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