

## Book Reviews

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*Act and Being: Toward a Theology of the Divine Attributes*, by Colin E. Gunton, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. ix, 162pp., \$29.00.

*Act and Being* contains Colin Gunton's first steps toward the doctrine of God in his projected systematic theology – a project cut short by his death in 2003. The majority of this work levels a “perhaps predictable” critique “that much of our inherited doctrine [of the divine attributes] appears to owe too little to biblical and trinitarian considerations, too much to a priori philosophical decision about what God may be conceived to be” (vii). This reliance on Greek philosophy at the expense of biblical revelation entails naming God primarily by negation. Quickly tracing the *via negativa* through history, Gunton demonstrates its connection to metaphysics that set divine and nondivine attributes in opposition and denigrate creation. Moreover the negative way's strong polarity of God and world ironically sets the stage for human ascent to deification apart from the mediating work of Christ. Thus the negative way is neither sufficiently material nor sufficiently incarnational (these two being closely related in Gunton's theology).

Rejecting the Greek metaphysics of the *via negativa* entails replacing its corollary analogical theory of predication with a univocal theory, which Gunton identifies in Scotus and Ockham and traces into the Reformation. Here we arrive at God's attributes by reference to the material world, not by stripping it away, as with the *via negativa*. So “we construe all our theological terms as functions of God's involvement in the created world” (71) as manifest in Christ and perfected in the Spirit. Gunton then locates his own theology of the attributes in this tradition and outlines its contours with heavy reliance on Barth's *Church Dogmatics* II.1 and its principle that “God's being is in act.”

Gunton criticizes few contemporary theologians, but *Act and Being* implicates movements such as “Radical Orthodoxy.” This is most clear at two points: in Gunton's reading of Aquinas as overly indebted to philosophy's God (Pickstock and Milbank's *Truth in Aquinas* notwithstanding); and in his commendation of Scotus, whom Radical Orthodoxy demonizes as a pioneer of theology's capitulation to modernity. Gunton's counternarrative thus foregrounds Reformation theology, which Radical Orthodoxy almost completely elides.

Mike DeJonge

*Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*, by Robert Webber, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003. 219pp., \$14.99.

In response to the 1999 International Consultation on Discipleship's concern that church evangelism programs today produce converts but not disciples, Webber sets out to develop a "full-orbed vision of the life of a disciple." His primary critique is that churches today have compartmentalized various ministries (worship, evangelism, discipleship, spiritual formation, and assimilation) – assigning them to different staff or committee persons. Instead we need an integrated approach – not a program, but a process. The early church (first through third centuries) stands as a viable model for today's faith-forming communities. Webber's text traces early history and documents to outline stages of the discipling process. With each stage, he suggests how today's churches can adapt this model to speak to our postmodern context.

In the New Testament church these elements made up the discipling process: Hearing the gospel, repentance, instruction to flee the corrupt world, baptism, and reception of the Holy Spirit. For the new convert, changes were expected in belief, belonging, and behavior: a radical departure from the past life into a politically risky new life of faith and action.

Once society was "Christianized" under Constantine, baptism shifted from adult to infant, and the process of formation took on a different structure with each new era of church growth and philosophy. Rebounding from the age of reason, our postmodern era hungers for a spirituality that is more mystical and sacramental. To meet these needs, Webber proposes such avenues as intentional neighborhoods; mentoring new converts; immersing the unchurched in the life of the community of faith through worship, service, and study; well-defined rites of Christian passage; a greater emphasis on Christian vocation; and a stronger stand over and against the predominant culture.

A study book with summary charts and discussion questions in each chapter, Webber's volume (third in Baker's six-part Ancient-Future series) gives the evangelizing congregation new grounding for deepening its discipling process. Although in its repeated jumps from ancient to postmodern the book doubles back on itself a lot, still it presents a comprehensive framework within which today's missional church can grow and deepen. Resource booklets have been developed for each stage of a six-month-long discipling journey.

Donna Rathert

*C.S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea: In Defense of the Argument from Reason*, by Victor Reppert, Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2003. 132pp.

C.S. Lewis argued that the existence of reason or rationality provided a strong argument for theism over against naturalism. The argument appears in various of Lewis's writings, but perhaps most prominently in *Miracles* (1947). Boiled down to

essentials, Lewis's argument is that naturalism, the belief that the universe is all there is, a random collection of atoms, is self-contradictory. If naturalism is true, then all mental processes are determined by the random collisions of atoms in the brain, which means that everything one thinks, including the notion that the universe is all there is and it is nothing more than a random collection of atoms, is also the result of a random collision of atoms and not to be trusted. The naturalist, according to Lewis, is put in the impossible position of arguing that all that exists, including all thinking, is the result of random, irrational causes, a position which undermines the reason by which he or she comes to this conclusion. The naturalist is, in Lewis's view, very much like a man sawing off the branch of the tree on which he is seated.

Reppert examines Lewis's argument against naturalism at length, particularly in light of developments in philosophy since Lewis's time. Lewis's argument was never meant to be a full fledged philosophical discussion of the matter, and, says Reppert, "one honors Lewis's achievement...not simply by repeating what he says, but by developing his ideas." Reppert concludes that while Lewis's argument does not "close the case against naturalism," it continues to provide "substantial reasons for preferring theism to naturalism."

As Reppert observes, Lewis did not imagine that his arguments irrefutably and absolutely "proved" the truth of Christianity, despite occasionally triumphalistic statements in his books. Lewis was both realistic and humble enough to know that his arguments pointed one toward Christianity, but were not, by themselves, absolutely conclusive. Consequently, Reppert treats Lewis's argument against naturalism in an even handed fashion, neither regarding Lewis as some sort of infallible authority in apologetics, nor, alternatively, seeing him as nothing more than an amateur. Reppert believes Lewis's argument against naturalism still has considerable validity today, and still points us in the right direction.

Reppert writing style is made difficult by convoluted and obscure discussions which at times get away from the main thesis. On occasion it also seems that Lewis's argument against naturalism and his argument against reductionism may be being confused. From a common-sense perspective, Lewis's argument against naturalism still holds considerable validity today. A heavier emphasis on this fact would have greatly strengthened Reppert's point that decades after it was first made, Lewis's argument is still convincing for many.

Mark G. McKim

*Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, ed. by Richard N. Longenecker, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002. xix, 251pp., \$19.95.

This collection of essays on church order and leadership includes three devoted to ancient pagan and Jewish contexts, four to the New Testament, two to the church fathers, and three to the main contemporary church orders: episcopal, presbyterian, and congregational. The collection's cover advertises its authors as "distinguished scholars" presenting a "coherent, panoramic picture." While the scholars *are* distinguished (e.g., Alan Segal, Craig Evans), the editor himself rightly eschews claims for coherence of panorama, affirming that the volume provides a general readership "only . . . some direction by setting out selected topics" – without footnote apparatus but aided by bibliographies.

Only a few chapters are successful in accomplishing the editor's goal. Longenecker discusses the relevant material in Paul's ten letters (not including the Pastoral Epistles) but, admitting the scantiness of the data, devotes half of his chapter to Pauline ecclesiastical images. Noteworthy is Peter Richardson's presentation of the archaeological evidence for pagan and Jewish voluntary associations, though nowhere in the volume is the corresponding Christian archaeological and literary evidence systematically discussed. I. H. Marshall writes a good reprise of pertinent data from his 1999 commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. Alan Hayes's chapter on the ante-Nicene churches of Lyons, Carthage, and Rome is the collection's best: it demonstrates convincingly how the churches were far more loosely organized and charismatic than is often supposed, including in Rome – with Cyprian exemplifying the increasing imposition in the third century of an upper-class Roman sense of order and hierarchy.

Two of the three chapters on the modern church are jarring compared with the rest of the volume. Both John Webster and Miroslav Volf contribute essays in abstruse theological construction, Webster recommending through a curious *via negativa* an episcopal order that bears little resemblance to the historic episcopate and Volf appealing to a "correspondence between Trinitarian and ecclesial communion" in order to overcome the view of the early Baptist, John Smyth, that the church emerges when souls saved individually by God join other isolated souls. David Hester's essay on the presbyterian order is more descriptive, though without neglecting its scriptural and theological basis.

Thomas A. Kopecek

*Ever Against the Stream: The Politics of Karl Barth, 1906-1968*, by Frank Jehle (trans. Richard and Martha Burnett), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. 117pp., \$22.00.

*Ever Against the Stream* is a carefully crafted book examining Barth's political thought over different periods of his lifetime. After an initial chapter dealing with Barth's theology, the remaining chapters provide a kind of biographical sketch of his life, viewed through the lens of politics. One sees Barth as a nineteen-year-old fraternity

student, a socialist pastor, a radical Romans-commentary writer, a Social Democrat in 1930s Germany, and a Social Democrat back in Switzerland. One also sees him banned from public speech during World War II, back in Germany to encourage restoration after the war and later criticized for his political position during the rise of communism.

Jehle uses the brief, yet illuminating chapters to provide an overall glimpse into Barth's political life. What he reveals is an independent, courageous thinker whose political thought flows from his theology of the gracious freedom of God. He also depicts a theologian whose political thought tends in the direction of social democracy nearly his entire life and who seemed to go, as indicated by the title, "ever against the stream." For instance, when Barth attacked national socialism in the 1930s, his stance was so resolute that even many of the Confessing Church turned away from him.

Jehle also shows how the Barth's political commitments frequently made him the target of criticism and even punishment. While pastoring at Safenwil and attempting to assist the workers there, a factory owner's son attacked Barth in the newspaper. Also, due to his uncompromising position with regard to national socialism, he was "retired" and had to leave Germany in the summer of 1935. Then, in Switzerland in 1941, he was banned from all political speech making for the duration of the war.

*Ever Against the Stream* is both well written and well argued. The book could be used not only as a good introduction to Barth's political thought, but also to his life as a whole. This work is also a helpful reminder that the theologian's magisterial volumes of *Church Dogmatics* are related to specific social and political concerns at the time of their writing.

John Jaeger

*Familiar Stranger: An Introduction to Jesus of Nazareth*, by Michael J. McClymond, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. xii, 212pp.

This book reviews fairly the history and current state of historical Jesus research and its results and on that basis presents the life and teachings of Jesus and their relation to Christian faith. It does so in a manner that can be recommended for individual and small group lay study. It has already found favor with scholars who are familiar with historical Jesus studies and with lay persons with no formal study of the topic.

The author states in the preface that he intends this book to be for Christians of all traditions and denominations and for those of other faiths, as well as agnostics, atheists, and spiritual seekers. His thought is that all readers might benefit if they find that the Jesus they are familiar with will become strange to them, or if those to whom Jesus is a

stranger will find a growing sense of familiarity. While eschewing the use of technicalities in discussing the life of Jesus, the author has also tried to avoid “dumbing down” his presentation, acknowledging that many issues are complex and cannot be simplified beyond a point at which there would be distortion of the issues.

In his attempt to reach laypeople, McClymond states that the second and third chapters dealing with the history, sources, and methods of Jesus research and the fourth chapter on the first-century Palestinian background of Jesus’ life are not absolutely essential for understanding what follows in the fifth through eleventh chapters. I would recommend that the last two chapters, “Wisdom, Apocalypse, and the Identity of Jesus” and “Thinking Outside the Boxes: A Critique of Contemporary Images of Jesus,” be studied carefully.

In “Thinking Outside the Boxes,” McClymond intends that the reader see Jesus in an unusual way. He states that Jesus was a home wrecker, sided with the poor, preached fire and brimstone, and was totalitarian. He contrasts these ideas to four popular views of Jesus in North America: the “family values Jesus,” the “end-of-the-world Jesus,” the “socially inclusive Jesus,” and the “global spirituality Jesus.” In each case McClymond brings the reader to see in the teachings of Jesus the challenge to live as a follower in the kingdom of God that puts our priorities and our ways in judgment. The chapter does well in relating Jesus’ way and teaching to our contemporary life. It illustrates that no one has a monopoly on misinterpretation.

McClymond sees Matthew 25:31-46, often termed, “The Parable of the Last Judgment,” as a description of Jesus’ eschatological teaching and as an explicit and elaborate portrayal of the coming of the son of man and his judgment (144-6). However, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other interpreters since their time, including this reviewer, have seen the passage differently in the context of Matthew. The literary form of the so-called “parable” is a judgment recognition scene, which in other literature such as 1 Enoch is a literary form used to give encouragement to the persecuted faithful. In Matthew 25 people are judged as to how they have received the least of Jesus’ brothers, not the poor in general. The point of Jesus’ eschatology being here expressed can still stand. The importance of helping the poor, as a characteristic of the Christian life, and its relation to the eschaton in the teaching of Jesus, can still be seen in the example and teaching of Jesus elsewhere in the gospels and especially in Luke as in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

This is an excellent work with a great deal to offer students and lay persons. It will reward many readers.

David W. Jurgens

*Feminist Theology*, by Natalie Watson, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003. x, 110pp., \$15.00.

Like other books in the Guides to Theology series, sponsored by the Christian Theological Research Fellowship, *Feminist Theology* is written for those who are new to the subject. It is divided into two chapters, "Scripture and Tradition," and "Themes in Feminist Theology."

In the first chapter Watson defines feminist theology as "the critical, contextual, constructive, and creative re-reading and re-writing of Christian theology." It "regards women – and their bodies, perspectives, and experiences – as relevant to the agenda of Christian theologians and advocates them as subjects of theological discourses and as full citizens of the church" (2, 3). Accordingly, Watson discusses feminist ways of reading scripture, and the history and development of feminist theology.

In the second chapter, Watson gives an overview of themes central to feminist theology: language for God, theological anthropologies in relation to women's bodies, sin and salvation, Mary, ecclesiology, and eschatology. She also discusses lesbian feminist theology, post-Christian feminism, and includes a few critiques of feminist theology from those who are inside and who are outside of feminist theology.

The last part of the book is an annotated bibliography of English works that are helpful for those new to the field, and works that are of special importance to feminist theology.

As a primer in feminist theology, this relatively short book was packed with information and adequately skimmed the surface of the field of feminist theology. The author is knowledgeable and able to simplify a wealth of information and boil it down to the essentials. However, I expected this book to be more objective and neutral in its treatment of feminist theology; instead, it was written with a definite bias. Watson is openly critical of theologians (female theologians in particular) who choose not to be feminist theologians but instead use methods found in patriarchal scholarship (4). Another weakness is that Watson has chosen to write exclusively on the feminist theologies that focus specifically on women's issues, not those that focus upon equality between men and women (4). I would recommend this book to those who want to know what feminist theology is about; I would also recommend that they keep in mind that the feminist theology field is much broader than what is written in this short book.

Amy de Groot Bowling

*The Future of Religious Colleges*, ed. by Paul J. Dovere, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. xi, 368pp., \$30.00.

Of the making of books about the Christian college, its past, present, and future, there seems, at the moment, to be no end. The present volume, edited by a retired Missouri Synod Lutheran educator, stands out in the crowd by its focus on the future and by the broad religious spectrum of its contributors.

This collection...is organized around five...questions: 1. What will be the place of religiously informed scholarship in the academy of tomorrow?...2. Is the trend toward disengagement from a distinctive religious identity and mission inevitable?...3. Can churches that have lost their college-relatedness be transformed? Can colleges that have lost their church-relatedness be transformed?...4. Are the diverse educational missions of religious colleges viable in an intellectual sense? In a social sense? How can such viability be encouraged and secured?...5. Will public policy and the interpretation thereof be an ally or an enemy of religious colleges?...” (editor’s introduction, xi).

The eighteen articles were originally presented as papers at a conference at Harvard University in 2000. The authors range from the well-known Calvinist historians George Marsden, Mark Noll, and Joel Carpenter to Roman Catholics, Mormons, mainline Protestants, Nazarenes, Baptists, Evangelicals, Lutherans, an Anabaptist-Mennonite, and a black United Methodist. Some of the essays are better than others. Some contributors are sanguine, some pessimistic. In any case, this stimulating volume has something for everyone.

Readers of the *Reformed Review* might well wonder why their Reformed Church colleges fail to appear in these pages or in other recent works about Christian colleges. If Calvin, Gordon, and Wheaton are included, why not Hope, Central, and Northwestern? The answer may lie either in the small size or the lack of a clearly Christian public image of these schools. One hopeful sign, however, is a volume by James Kennedy and Caroline Simon, provisionally titled *Can Hope Endure?*, that is due for publication in 2005. It is a historical analysis of the delicate balancing act that Hope College has performed between openness and Christian focus, especially during the twentieth century.

Earl Wm. Kennedy

*The Gospel According to Moses: What My Jewish Friends Taught Me about Jesus*, by Athol Dickson, Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003. 268pp., \$16.99.

A Southern Baptist layman, Athol Dickson, accepted an invitation from Philip, a Reform Jew, to participate in a Bible discussion group (Chever Torah) at his Reform temple on Saturday mornings. A few trial visits turned into a five-year interchange, joining significant numbers of Christians in an interfaith examination of differences and similarities between Judaism and Christianity. They studied the Jewish Bible (the

Christian Old Testament), selections from the Talmud, and the New Testament. After five years, Dickson, with some concerned input from Philip, produced the results of the interchange as a conservative Christian's enrichment of his faith in the gospel, acknowledging that many of his doctrines had originated in the Old Testament and had been paralleled in the Talmud. The Reform Jews had not converted the Christians who participated, nor had the Christians converted the Jews, but both groups understood better in what way "Judaism is the root of Christianity" (14).

The perspective of the book is Christian and the intended readership is also Christian. Yet the sources and much of the terminology derives from Judaism. The author also hopes to provide a bridge to Jewish readers, not specifically to proselytize them but to aid them in understanding Christianity as a natural development from Judaism.

After nine chapters of substantial agreement on sin, grace, and obedience, Dickson deals with two problem areas: "Skeletons in My Closet: Evil Christians in Spite of Jesus," and, "One and All: The Trinity and Monotheism." He confesses not only Christian involvement in creating ghettos and instituting holocausts but also insensitivity toward Jewish feelings in calling their scriptures the "Old" Testament and in begging the question of messianic identity by regularly adding the title Christ to the name of Jesus.

Dickson deserves credit for his effort to smooth relations between Christians and Jews, but in doing so, he has deemphasized the newness of God's revelation in Jesus.

Sylvio J. Scorza

*Hear My Story: Understanding the Cries of Troubled Youth*, by Dean Borgman, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003. xiv, 418pp., \$19.95.

A veteran of the youth ministry field, Dean Borgman crafts this latest book about troubled youth carefully and thoughtfully, integrating his own observations, current research, theory, and theology. As the title suggests, this book focuses upon troubled youth, who are, Borgman points out, in the minority. Most young people are "doing fine." This book focuses upon subcultures, smaller groups of kids who are not doing fine, for a variety of reasons.

Topics or issues are discussed and arranged into four parts: (1) Context and scope of trouble; (2) growing up healthy and unhealthy; (3) the problem of violence; and 4) addictions, healing, and reconciliation. Within these four parts Borgman explores, among other things, the theology of suffering, developmental development, societal trends and problems related to violence (urban and suburban), and healing. The

presentation is well organized, allowing the reader to select a particular topic of interest and find it quickly.

This book could easily be used as a textbook in an undergraduate or graduate program, or even as a group study book for youth workers in the field. It gives a broad perspective on issues related to troubled youth and never separates theology from current events or from academic endeavors or research. There are questions at the end of each chapter and scenarios for reflection in the chapter, lending itself well to group discussion. Additionally, Borgman includes references to books, articles, and sites on the Internet for those who want to know more about a particular topic.

Borgman has a depth of knowledge and ability to think critically about youth issues. Particularly rich is the way in which he views culture, research, and the problems of troubled youth through the lens of theology. It is a good resource, but the discussion of theory and theology will make it difficult to read and digest in one or two sittings.

Amy de Groot Bowling

*Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thought on the Church's Ministry*, by Edward Farley, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003. xvi, 189 pp.

These thirteen essays by Edward Farley, Vanderbilt University Divinity School professor of theology emeritus, are a response to the "ever-present tension in virtually all religious communities between popular religion, or piety, and faith. . . ." Popular piety tends to be "ethnocentric, culturally and racially xenophobic, individualistic, cosmological and literalistic, casuistical, authoritarian, biblicistic . . . and persuaded (certain) that its beliefs and practices are identical with what God believes and desires." Farley laments the continued isolation of congregations from the textual riches, methods, and insights of theological education. The essays are grouped under three headings: Practical Theology, Homiletics and Worship, and Christian Education and Pastoral Care.

In part two, the author challenges the prevailing "bridge" paradigm of preaching, i.e., to build a bridge from the Bible passage to the situation of the congregation. This "failed paradigm" departs from primitive Christian preaching. Jesus proclaimed the impending reign of God. Early Christian preachers proclaimed the good news of salvation through Jesus.

Farley offers a new paradigm in which the task of preaching "is the disruption of the world of the congregation under the hopeful expectation of redemption." He thinks ". . . if the world of Gospel embraces the mysteries of God's working, then it will always transcend and even be normative toward specific passages of Scripture. This

transcendent character of the world of Gospel is the reason that the church can expose, judge, and move beyond the xenophobias, homophobias, and sexism of the ancient community and its Scripture.”

Part three examines the current practice of education and pastoral care in the church. Farley claims that our calling is to faithfulness, not to religion, to witness to the gospel, not to growth and success. In contrast, he notes the idolatrous nature of much religion and the need of popular piety for religion to exist. “Popular piety is the fuel that runs the engine of religion.” The excellent curricula of the 1960s some of us remember failed because they were offered to an “unlearning culture.”

For pastors, preachers, and teachers interested in enabling today’s church, I recommend this book.

Robert Hoeksema

*Signs Amid the Rubble*, by Lesslie Newbigin, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. 121pp., \$15.00.

This is a collection of lectures by a theologian who throughout his long life brought a gospel-driven theology to bear on the church and the culture in which it finds itself. In addition to lectures given early in his life in Bangalore and later in Cambridge (Henry Martyn Lectures), there are a few pages summarizing his thoughts about gospel and culture. Some transcriptions are interrupted with parenthetical references which are irrecoverable and which the editor attempts to fill with his knowledge and research of Newbigin.

These lectures touch on the major themes that occupied Newbigin’s ministry and that are worthy of reflection by all of us who attempt to bring the gospel as missionaries to the American culture. The Bangalore Lectures entitled, “The Kingdom of God and the Idea of Progress,” challenge our presuppositions about the direction of history, presuppositions largely distilled from the culture in which we live. Newbigin’s emphasis that God owns the world and refuses to allow popular cultural and theological trends to compromise God’s revelation of what history is and how it has been dramatically affected by Jesus Christ informs our world view. For example: “Every faithful act of service . . . which seemed to have been forever lost and forgotten in the rubble of history will be seen on [the day of resurrection] to have contributed to the perfect fellowship of God’s Kingdom” (47).

The Henry Martyn Lectures offer similar gems to generate thought. Newbigin’s thoughts on the differences between proselytism and evangelism should be required reading for church leaders who seek to add numbers to an organization rather than to

minister to the souls of people. His postscript on gospel and culture states unequivocally that we bring truth to bear on our culture when [we] begin to tell stories about what this God has done (117). Newbigin takes our often-restricted understanding of what God can do and asserts, “We are required to provide space for disobedience, for dissent, for disbelief, in the faith that God in His own way and in His own time will manifest His rule” (120).

Newbigin’s writings are a welcome antidote to thoughtless evangelistic fervor, technique driven church growth, and the subtle, gospel-denying religious approach to faith that emphasizes a clear knowledge of how God works and rather than who God is. His thoughts are communicated with the passion of a believer and leader who lives into his message. Perhaps his most powerful assertion is found in the last sentence of the book, where he notes that conferences on mission and evangelism are often pervaded by anxiety and guilt. He calls us to recall that the resurrection and the mission of the church began with “an enormous explosion of joy,” and “the mission of the church is simply the continuing communication of that joy—joy in the Lord” (121). Newbigin has been called “a fresh voice of Christian prophecy in the contemporary situation,” and this collection affirms that title.

Peter Van Elderen

*StormFront: The Good News of God*, James V. Brownson, Inagrace T. Dietterich, Barry A. Harvey, and Charles C. West, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. xii, 129pp., \$18.00.

Five essays offer a vision for the church of the gospel, and our culture that has tended to tame and distort it. In his foreword, George R. Hunsberger says of this volume: “It promises to prod the continuing conversion that the Spirit intends for the church. . . .”

Barry Harvey shaped the first chapter, “Storm: God Addresses the Spirit of the Age.” The author laments our consuming culture which “locates health, happiness, and meaning . . . in the realm of private feelings and values rather than in the shared mission in which God’s people participate.” Harvey writes of God’s mission in a fallen world, in the work of Jesus, and in the church.

James Brownson drafted chapters two and three. Chapter two is entitled “Allegiance: Participating in God’s Intentions.” The theme is salvation. “The good news of salvation is that God wins.” We are created not to be consumers, but to know God and to participate in God’s life and mission. The author submits Mark 1:1-5 and Galatians 1:6-8; 2:7-14 as test cases.

Chapter three, “Communion: Dying and Rising with Jesus Christ,” reminds the reader that the life of Jesus defines the lives of those who give allegiance to him. What does it

mean to die (1 Cor. 1:18-25) and rise (Eph. 1:20-23) with Christ? In the church we are to live in God's faithfulness, as if death is defeated, while confronting the powers of this world.

"Powers: The Church and the Life of the World," was drafted by Charles West. The problem is power. God's power is, by God's design, in covenant. Justice is about power. God's justice struggles with the injustice of the people of God. In this battle between God and the powers, the mission of the church is analysis, intercession, prophecy, and imagination.

Inagrace Dietterich shaped chapter five, "Practices: Reoriented in the Way of Christ." The chapter focuses on the Beatitudes, which "are not saying about individual moral character" but a description of "the quality of life and witness of communities who members have heard the good news." The church finds its righteousness in receiving, celebrating, and manifesting the love, mercy, and forgiveness of God.

This book reminds us of whose we are and what we are to be.

Robert Hoeksema

*What Happens in Holy Communion?* by Michael Welker (trans. by John F. Hoffmeyer), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xi, 192pp., \$18.00 (paper).

*What Happens in Holy Communion?* is a unique book in which a major German theologian, Michael Welker of the University of Heidelberg, addresses many interesting and significant questions regarding the Lord's Supper. He covers such questions as: "What does it mean to say that Christ is present in Communion?"; "Is it permissible to exclude people from the celebration in some situations?"; and "Are bread and wine the only appropriate elements, or are can other items be substituted, such as apples and water?" While writing from a Reformed perspective, Welker attempts to address these and many other questions in an ecumenical spirit.

The book contains twelve chapters, each of which address in different ways the question, "What happens in holy Communion?" In the first part of the book, Welker discusses Communion as people thanking God and celebrating a community meal in a symbolic manner. In the second section, he focuses on the Lord's Supper as the place where Christ's presence is experienced in a worshipful and profound way. In the third part, Welker addresses Communion as the joyous gathering of the universal and eternal church, as well as the hopeful gathering in anticipation of the new creation and the glorification of God.

Welker shows that the Lord's Supper has meaning for the full range of theological doctrines, as expressed in a Christian statement such as the Apostle's Creed. His answers to the various questions about liturgical practice are thus anchored in carefully considered theological reflection. Welker provides a helpful contribution to theology and a beneficial resource for the church with this work.

John Jaeger