

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, by Kevin Bauder. Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2012. 263 pp. \$19.99 (paperback). \$24.99 (hardcover).

Finally, a relevant, articulate, and readable treatment of Baptist principles and polity by one who understands and embraces Baptist belief! Author Kevin Bauder has taught Baptist polity for a number of years at Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Plymouth, MN) where he currently serves as Research Professor of Systematic Theology. This book is preceded by several others wherein he treats his specialties—evangelicalism and fundamentalism. His purpose in writing this work is twofold: to logically explain and practically apply Baptist distinctives. Hence the two divisions: *The Baptist Distinctives* and *New Testament Order*.

Since Bauder's plan is to consider the Baptist distinctives integratively and scripturally, he explains that their uniqueness lies not in individuality (other groups have held to certain of these distinctives) but in their combined witness, that is, "no other group holds the whole bundle" (12). And their genius lies in the fact that they are scripturally derived. But that does not mean that all Baptists have come to the same scriptural agreement. Therefore, Bauder provides an explanation of his own hermeneutical principles for interpreting relevant texts. These principles, he writes, appear to be the assumptions "implicit in mainstream Baptist thought" (13). They are three in number: (1) didactic passages should interpret historical ones; (2) clear passages should interpret obscure ones; and (3) deliberate or explicit passages should interpret incidental ones. These all fit under the rubric of Scripture interpreting Scripture. Bauder's faithful adherence to this hermeneutical approach is the mainstay that provides both coherence and defense of Baptist doctrines.

Bauder begins his discussion of Baptist distinctives in order of priority with what has been the most important one for most Baptists—authority. He goes to great lengths to insist that it is not enough to merely accept biblical authority; to be a consistent Baptist, one must explicitly affirm the absolute authority of the New Testament in matters of faith and order. "Baptists insist that only the New Testament may be used to establish the doctrine and structure of the church" (24). Practically, Bauder is right, but historically Baptists did not always make such a fine distinction, at least in their earliest confessions. For example, the First London Confession (1644) states that the "Rule of...Knowledge, Faith and Obedience, concerning the worship and service of God, and all other Christian duties, is not man's inventions...but only the word of

God contained in the Canonical Scriptures” (article 7). Likewise, the General Baptist Standard Confession (1660) concludes “that the holy Scriptures is the rule whereby Saints both in matters of Faith, and conversation are to be regulated, they being able to make men wise unto salvation” (article 23). However, this qualification does not in the least detract from what I believe is Bauder’s most important contribution to Baptist distinctives: they derive from Scripture, which is necessarily and practically sufficient, as expressed in Baptist symbolics, namely, creeds and confessions.

In his explanation of the subsequent Baptist distinctives—believer baptism, pure church membership, individual Christian responsibility (priesthood of the believer and soul liberty), congregational government, and separation of church and state—Bauder is excellent in his organization of content, delineation of detail, and explanation of controversial points. Limited space permits only a few examples. In treating believer baptism, Bauder correctly insists on what Baptists have always believed about this defining doctrine: it should include proper subjects (believers), proper meaning (identification with Christ), and proper mode (immersion). To these some Baptists have added proper administration. Each of these topics receives precise explanation of how Baptists have scripturally established their beliefs. Under proper subjects, Bauder lists five reasons why babies should not be baptized on the basis of Scripture’s sufficiency, concluding that there is simply no evidence in the New Testament for infant baptism. He approaches proper meaning in the same way, saying what it does not mean (circumcision, washing of sins) in contrast with baptism’s biblical meaning—a symbol of identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He does the same thing with the proper mode of immersion, which verifies meaning. When treating the issue of proper administration, a debatable point among Baptists, he carefully distinguishes between *irregular* baptism (non-church related, e.g., camps) and *invalid* baptism (where the symbolism is destroyed by heresy, e.g., apostate churches). “Baptists are unanimous,” writes Bauder, “that baptism is invalid when it has the wrong subject, meaning, or mode. They have not come to the same unanimity regarding baptisms that lack proper authority” (53). Otherwise, if baptism has been observed properly, it is sin to repeat it.

Thankfully, Bauder discusses the necessity of Baptist confessionalism. Historically, the order has been confession, then covenant. Bauder reverses the order, highlighting covenant as the most important means of unifying the church by promising to believe and behave biblically. I would like to have seen a recommendation of catechism, which would complete the confessional responsibility of the local church: confession (statement of belief), covenant (promise of belief), and catechism (confirmation of belief). The last, I am afraid, is all but lost to our Baptist churches.

Bauder’s aversion to pastoral monarchialism in the local church is evident throughout, particularly in his chapter on congregational government. This type of polity is the best means of assuring accountability

of both members and leaders. He cites several New Testament passages to support this, including a Baptist favorite, Acts 15, describing the Jerusalem Council (which Bauder considers simply a local church business meeting). Whether a church employs only one elder or a plurality of elders, the congregation is the final decision-making authority. Pastors lead by teaching and example; they do not dictate nor pontificate. Nor should they hire and fire. These decisions are reserved for the local church body. Deacons are not governing boards but specially appointed servants to administer the physical aspects of the church. Churches in which congregations govern, pastors lead, and deacons serve facilitate spiritual unity.

The book contains a few minor historical slips. For example, Bauder refers to Constantine's "merger of church and state," a popular but inaccurate view. As *pontifex maximus*, Constantine reserved for himself the supervision of all religions in the empire, including pagan. In this context, Christianity received most favored status, but was not actually made the official state religion until Theodosius I in A.D. 380. Another slip-up is referencing Anabaptists as Baptist "cousins," perhaps an unwitting concession to the Anabaptist kinship theory, but a designation with which early confessional Baptists would have been uncomfortable. Otherwise, Bauder does a masterful job in delineating the responsibilities of both church and state. His biblical illustrations for the proper use of civil disobedience are pertinent and useful in helping Baptists understand their responsibilities under renegade as well as lawful governments. Rarely found in other treatments of Baptist polity is a section on Christian involvement in governmental affairs. Baptists have the right, even the responsibility, to provide moral leadership in key areas. Bauder is to be commended for tackling the "knotty" issues that continue to confront Baptists, such as excessive and unfair government regulation, insurrection, and how to behave in an increasingly antagonistic culture.

The second and much shorter section of the book enumerates and discusses the various types of Baptist organization with the advantages and disadvantages of each, followed by most helpful critiques of Landmarkism and baptismal regeneration. Bauder boldly counters the arguments of these views with careful scriptural exegesis. It is in these two sections where his three hermeneutical principles are brilliantly displayed. By insisting on proper linguistic and contextual interpretation and allowing clear Scripture references to explain obscure ones, he completely repudiates false theories. Baptists who have been looking for answers on how to counter pseudo-Baptist claims of extreme successionism and salvific baptism may find them here.

Bauder's last chapter ends the book abruptly but practically. And if anything, Bauder wants to be eminently practical while being thoroughly exegetical. He describes how to organize a Baptist church. The subject makes perfect sense: take the principles outlined in the previous chapters and put them to work. Do something! Start what Baptists have always been about—a local New Testament church.

The one area that could be an improvement of the book relates to referential framework. In treating denominational distinctives one must have solid scriptural arguments (in this Bauder shines)—this is the preferential approach. But the support of historical source material via footnotes or at least recommendations of appropriate references would have supported what otherwise appears to be Bauder's assumptions or preferences. His normal frame of reference is what he is most familiar with—the GARBC and related groups. But a larger historical framework would have added perspective and even greater credibility to his assertions. This is done occasionally and, where it is done, with great effect. But footnotes are generally sparse. For example, when Bauder introduces his study with hermeneutical assumptions that he finds implicit in mainstream Baptist thought, I would like to have seen some evidence for this, even in the form of suggested studies. Certainly, such an addition would increase the book's length, perhaps considerably, but would also enhance its value. Yet, all in all, this is a superbly written manual on how to have orderly churches. And heaven knows we need them in these desperate times of uncertainty and unbelief. I highly recommend this book and encourage every Baptist pastor and church member to read and heed its contents.

Gerald L. Priest

*Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How to Reverse It)*, by Robert D. Lupton. New York: Harper One, 2011. 191 pp. \$22.99.

You drive up to a man in tattered clothes standing by the road holding a sign stating he is hungry and asking for help. A poorly dressed woman approaches you asking for money to buy food for her children. You watch a video about the destitute orphans overseas and hear the plea to help with just a small payment each month. As a Christian, your heart is moved with compassion for these individuals, so you give of your own limited resources to provide aid. But does your act of kindness benefit the individual, or does it harm him? In *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How to Reverse It)*, Robert D. Lupton argues that much charitable work is destructive for those receiving the gift. Lupton is the founder and president of Focused Community Strategies (FCS) Urban Ministries, based in Atlanta, GA. He has lived and served in inner-city Atlanta for nearly forty years, focusing on neighborhood and community development. Lupton has a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Georgia and is also the author of four other books on Christians and urban ministries: *Theirs Is the Kingdom*; *Return Flight*; *Renewing the City*; and *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life*.

Charities are a big industry in the United States. Millions of dollars and thousands of hours of manpower are given each year in an effort to relieve the hurting. Unfortunately, much of that effort is toxic in nature because it offers crisis relief instead of development. Lupton proposes an “Oath for Compassionate Service,” similar to the Hippocratic Oath, that would better serve charitable efforts. First, “Never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves.” Second, “Limit one-way giving to emergency situations.” Third, “Strive to empower the poor through employment, lending, investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements.” Fourth, “Subordinate self-interests to the needs of those being served.” Fifth, “Listen closely to those you seek to help, especially to what is not being said—unspoken feelings may contain essential clues to effective service.” And sixth, “Above all, do no harm” (8–9). Lupton expounds on these principles through the rest of the book, weaving real-life examples of how these principles were either abused or successfully implemented.

One poignant illustration comes from Lupton’s first Christmas as a resident of inner-city Atlanta. As he was enjoying coffee in his neighbor’s home on Christmas Eve, a family from the suburbs arrived bringing their donated Christmas gifts. Lupton watched as the mom had to mask her own embarrassment from the guests and then make an excuse to the children for their dad’s sudden disappearance. Though Lupton had often shared the experience of the family coming in from the suburbs, for the first time he witnessed the experience of the struggling families living in the city. This incident, combined with several more to come, solidified in Lupton’s mind the danger of much of charity work. Too often, giving boosts the pride of the giver while simultaneously humiliating and hurting the receiver. Lupton replaced their adopt-a-family program for giving gifts at Christmas with a Family Store. Those who wanted to help donated unwrapped gifts to the store, where low-income families could then purchase them at bargain prices or work in the store to be able to provide the gifts for their family. In this way, those in need could maintain their dignity as persons while still receiving help.

Lupton’s book is ostensibly Christian, but evangelicals will find no real theological value in the work. Lupton rarely cites Scripture passages, and when he does there is no attempt at expositing the passage. For example, he uses Matthew 25:40 to assert that helping the poor is like helping Jesus but offers no defense for that interpretation of “the least of these my brothers.” In fact, he even removes “my brothers” through the use of ellipses (44). He interacts with Christian writers and thinkers, but not on a theological level. Instead, the focus is always on the practical nature of charity work. Lupton addresses the effectiveness of short-term mission trips, food pantries, international aid, and other programs by considering their ability to relieve physical suffering and provide for better earthly lives. Those searching for biblical evaluations of these efforts or for their connection to spiritual and eternal realities will need to look elsewhere.

Though Lupton's work lacks theological substance, it is filled with practical insights. Once a church or believer determines they need to do good to all people and to love their neighbor, they must face the question of how to carry out those commands. *Toxic Charity* is a valuable resource in answering that question. In providing examples of both flawed approaches and effective approaches, Lupton's book shows how to avoid hurting the people one is seeking to help.

Ben Edwards

*For Calvinism*, by Michael Horton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 196 pp. \$16.99.

Michael Horton, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary California, writes for those outside the Reformed tradition, "to consider its rich resources for faith and practice in the twenty-first century" (15). He desires to press believers to examine the Scriptures and grow from "vague sentiments" to "explicit convictions" about God's sovereignty in providence and salvation (16). Appealing to the college or early seminary reader, Horton gives an irenic account of Calvinism and defends it against its most common attacks. His knowledge of Calvin, the Protestant Reformation, Arminius, and Wesley lend credibility and depth to his account.

Horton outlines his book according to the Synod of Dordt's five canons, adding chapters on the Christian life, Christian missions, and an analysis of the New Calvinism. Romans 3, 1 Corinthians 2, and Ephesians 2 form the backbone of his defense of the bondage of the unconverted will to sin and unbelief. He stresses that the problem is not with human will as God created it but with the perversion of that will due to the free choice of Adam.

Romans 9 is the centerpiece of Horton's exposition of unconditional personal election to salvation. He answers objections that this text refers only to nations and not to individuals by pointing to the "children of promise" language, which he takes as "clearly soteriological" (60).

Horton's argument on the atonement is that every model with biblical support can be explained as a facet of "vicarious substitution, addressing the objective problem of guilt before a holy God" (90). From there, he believes that the efficacy terminology associated with vicarious substitution supports the idea that "the specific intention of Christ as he went to the cross was to save his elect" (92).

Horton cuts down a caricature in his treatment of efficacious grace: "The will is liberated, not violated" (107). That is not to say that individuals are granted contrarian free will in regeneration, rather, the renewal sinners receive gives "us our voice back, so that we can join the choir of praise to God's glorious grace" (111).

Consistent with the original historical setting of these canons, Horton points up the weaknesses of Arminian objections to Calvinism along the way. He shows how Arminians inevitably come to the ostensibly Calvinist conclusion, "God could have prevented [evil] but decided to allow it" (59). Horton's comments also tell against Olson's recent censure of Calvinism, "Classic Arminianism and Calvinism actually agree that God chose not to save everyone.... Arminians hold that it is more important to God to give people free will to decide their own destiny than it is to save everyone" (63). In a final section, Horton answers some practical objections to Calvinism, endeavoring to show that Calvinism as a system and as a movement has had few rivals in the Christian pursuit of holiness, hard work, and global missions.

The greatest strength of *For Calvinism* would be evident in a casual, even superficial, comparison of this book with Olson's counterpart. The consistent use of a multitude of Scripture passages from Moses to Isaiah to John, puts the lie to Olson's claim that Calvinism's vision of divine sovereignty is based on a few isolated texts. By comparison, Arminianism's strength seems to rest solely on an egalitarian understanding of 1 John 4:8 and John 3:16. In addition, two points from Horton's treatment of the Christian life shine. First, Horton's radical view of ethics does the Calvinist tradition proud: good deeds that are not done "out of love for God" are worthless before God (125). Second, Horton's explanation of how God works to make his people holy and happy through the preaching of the word and the administration of Christ's ordinances challenges readers to be more biblical and less esoteric about sanctification. Horton's skepticism about the New Calvinism's sustainability apart from the life of particular local churches is also refreshing.

On the other hand, I felt that Horton failed to convincingly answer objections to particular redemption in chapter 4 and objections to the Reformed approach to the Ten Commandments "not as the way *to* life but as the way *of* life" in chapter 6 (124). Also while Horton's emphasis on divine initiative is well supported by Scripture throughout the book, his treatment of human responsibility, specifically the Christian's responsibility to actively pursue obedience, was incomplete at best and misleading at worst. Those who are looking for a clear vision of the active cultivation of Christlikeness in the Reformed tradition will need to look elsewhere.

Horton provides a winsome, knowledgeable defense of Calvinism, and while I have reservations here and there, on the whole I would recommend it for anyone interested in pushing beyond the fad to the substance of Calvinism.

Jeremy Pittsley

*Against Calvinism*, by Roger E. Olson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 207 pp. \$16.99.

Well-known Arminian theology professor, author, and blogger, Roger Olson, has taken on the task of refuting Calvinism in this brief volume. He clarified his intent in the subtitle of the e-book edition, “rescuing God’s reputation from radical Reformed theology.” The occasion for the book is the recent revival (disturbing to Olson) of the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God as found in John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards (21–22). Olson does not aspire to detail Arminian theology here but to bring attention to what he sees as errors within Calvinist theology.

Olson’s introduction outlines his background in research in Reformed studies and his theological framework, including the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (24). In the first three chapters, Olson documents the ambiguity of terms like “Calvinist” and “Reformed” and attempts to clarify what he is critiquing. He specifies that while the Reformed umbrella is broad, he is focusing his attention on the classic TULIP system along with its formulation of God’s relationship to evil (28). He strives to appraise a living version of Calvinism and not a caricature, so he records the historical continuity of the basic TULIP system from John Calvin (who did not embrace limited atonement according to Olson), through Jonathan Edwards and Loraine Boettner, to R. C. Sproul and John Piper. Olson cites these five theologians frequently throughout the following chapters as he critiques their doctrines of providence (chapter 4), unconditional election (chapter 5), limited atonement (chapter 6), and irresistible grace (chapter 7).

While Olson organizes his chapter divisions around these distinctive tenets of Calvinism, his argument can be reduced to the following twin ideas: Calvinism cannot meaningfully support the biblical thesis that God is love but instead it presents a morally despicable God. First John 4:8 and John 3:16 are the biblical cornerstone texts upon which he bases the first side of his argument. “How is God love,” Olson asks, “if he foreordains many people to hell for eternity when he could save them because election to salvation is always completely unconditional and has nothing to do with character or choices?” (111). On the other side, Olson departs from his generally irenic tone when he remarks, “While non-Calvinists are willing to admit that high Calvinism is God-centered, they have good reason to wonder how exactly to distinguish between the God it centers itself on and Satan—except that Satan wants all people damned to hell and God wants only a certain number damned to hell” (159).

Olson uses a few pages in various places throughout the book to suggest Arminianism’s “evangelical synergism” as an alternative (172). In order to preserve creaturely guilt and thus God’s reputation, Olson suggests that God, without whose permission nothing occurs, has drawn back his sovereignty to allow his creatures to express their free choice (98–99). Then, within the world of depravity these free beings have

erected, God has universally granted humans the ability to choose Christ for salvation. Thus, the believer's part in his salvation is allowing God to save him. From that perspective the believer's response to this universal prevenient grace is essential, but it does not merit or add to his salvation (169–72).

The strength of Olson's work is presenting a cogent, thoughtful response to Calvinism from within the bounds of historic evangelical orthodoxy. (Though Olson dedicates his book to Clark Pinnock among others, Olson's theology is not openness theology.) In addition the book is free of the vitriol that sometimes characterizes debates on this important issue. Instead the reader will find thoughtful arguments based on biblically informed ethics.

The weakness of the book is Olson's concept of "divine self-limiting sovereignty" (101). Here he is liable to precisely the same critique he levels against Calvinism. If God could unilaterally save everybody and prevent all evil if he relinquished his self-limitation, why would he refuse to do so? On Olson's view, human free will must be maintained, or God's reputation would be stained (23). That is to say, if God unilaterally saved people, if he violated their free will, he would become responsible, in Olson's understanding, when others sin and refuse to believe. In other words, even on the Arminian view, if God allows any sinners to be judged for their sins, God must be more concerned with his reputation than he is with the salvation of all of his fallen creatures. While Arminians like Olson recoil from such a conclusion, historic Calvinists have learned to trust the God whose own reputation is so important to him because they see this God revealed in Scripture.

While I doubt that Olson will convince many Calvinists with the argument of the book, he does provide a helpful, college-level introduction to the main arguments against the Calvinist system.

Jeremy Pittsley

*Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, by Walter Kaiser, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. xix + 128 pp. \$16.99.

Baker Publishing Group has released a second edition of Walter Kaiser's *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*. This concise and readable work, which generally follows the Old Testament canonically, is reorganized and expanded throughout, including a brief excursus on Enoch and a four-page study and discussion guide. The book's message may sound familiar to mission personnel as it is an expanded form of a six-page article in the mission training curriculum, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, edited by Ralph Winter and Steve Hawthorne. Altogether, though, the second edition of the book disappoints as it does not provide the precise exegetical underpinnings for its overall thesis—that centrifugal mission begins with Genesis

12:3: “the first Great Commission mandate of the Bible” (xix). Kaiser claims that Abraham and his successors had “a missionary mandate to be actively involved in spreading the good news” (12). The argument that Genesis 12:3 and Matthew 28:19–20 are nearly coextensive in task, however, is unconvincing.

A few of the weaknesses of the book are in order. First, while Kaiser argues successfully that Israel was a channel of universal blessing to the nations, he states too much when he equates this with a missionary mandate for Israel’s active witness to the nations. For example, Kaiser’s exposition of Psalm 67 provides no proof or argument for his position, rather mere assertions. He writes, “Accordingly, God had not blessed Israel and been kind to them because they were his pets, his favorites, or because his grace was limited to them for the period of the Old Testament. Instead, God’s mode of dealing with Israel was to communicate to them a message that they in turn were responsible for disseminating to all the peoples of the earth” (30). In the final sentences of this section, Kaiser confuses centrifugal and centripetal ideas in the same flow of thought: “This is what the goodness of God was driving Israel to: a key way to bring all the nations on planet earth to believe in him. Therefore, Israel was to be a witnessing, proclaiming, and evangelizing nation. The Gentiles just had to be brought to the light!” (31). God’s blessing the nations by blessing Israel (cf. Gen 12:3) is not the same as a mandate for active centrifugal witness to the nations.

Second, although the Psalms contain phrases that speak of Israel exhorting the nations, this does not demand a centrifugal active witness. Psalm 96:7–8 (ESV) reads, “Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts!” In reference to Psalm 96, Kaiser writes, “The point is that there was a call for an *active* witness (i.e., it was to be centrifugal in its effect, reaching out from the center to others) by Israel to the Gentiles” (33). Kaiser, however, misses a definite linguistic connection in 1 Chronicles, which describes a historical context for how poetic lines found in Psalm 96 can be employed. The Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16 is clearly connected to Israel’s worship at the “tent” (v. 1). Proclaiming that the nations should worship God is worshipful prayer to God.

Finally, Kaiser does not always distinguish between Old Testament prophetic passages and Old Testament passages that concern that era. Chapter 6 presents an overview of Isaiah’s universalism and then gives particular attention to two servant songs found in Isaiah 42 and 49. Kaiser argues that Isaiah (49:6) encouraged Israelites in the Old Testament era to witness actively to Gentile nations even as Paul and Barnabas in the New Testament (cf. Acts 13:47). He writes, “These New Testament believers saw Isaiah 49:6 to be an authorization addressed directly to them, just as surely as the audience in Isaiah’s day saw this” (61). Yet, the passage is unmistakably prophetic in orientation. Yahweh is giving his Servant a new task; this is not a simple missionary mandate reminder to a failed Israel.

Kaiser's work does provide helpful exposition. For example, chapter 1 presents an overview of three cycles of sin (the Fall, the Flood and the Tower of Babel) and promise (Gen. 3:15, 9:27 and 11:4/12:1–3). Kaiser provides a two-page explanation for translating the verb “to bless” in Genesis 12:3 as passive, not reflexive (11–12). And Kaiser expands on his earlier edition with a more thorough exposition of Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. While the ESV, NASB, and NIV all translate v. 19 differently, Kaiser argues convincingly that *torah* has the sense of a “charter” for humanity. While these expositions are important, and the book provides a compelling argument for God's universal intentions in both Testaments, the overall depth of the book is still lacking.

Kevin Paul Oberlin

*God Is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion*, by Rob Lister. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 333 pp. \$22.99.

The modern era has witnessed a sweeping shift in theology away from the traditional conception that God is invulnerable to changing emotional states brought upon him by his creatures, an idea commonly known as divine impassibility. In its place has arisen a widespread consensus that a modern conception of God, one that is relevant to our increasing awareness of global human suffering, cannot afford to deny that God also suffers with his creatures and is, therefore, passible.

Many modern passibilists have argued against a caricatured view of impassibility as teaching a God who is unfeeling, aloof, and devoid of emotional warmth toward the sufferings of his creatures. On the other hand, a few prominent impassibilists have defended the idea of divine emotions while noting that they are qualitatively different from human emotions. In his book *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, Rob Lister argues historically and exegetically for what he calls a qualified model of impassibility. His thesis, as captured in his title, emphasizes the classic dual affirmation of impassibility, that God is impassible and thus transcends the finite experience of suffering, and God is impassioned, possessing real and vibrant affections (36). The Incarnation, therefore, is the means by which God's natural impassibility was overcome in order for Christ to undertake the suffering and judicial effects of sin. Though Lister gives brief attention to the Christological implications of his thesis, the main focus of his work lies in the realm of theology proper.

A key feature of Lister's argument, one that distinguishes his qualified model from other impassibilists such as Thomas Weinandy and Paul Helm, is his emphasis on divine responsiveness. While God's eternal commitment to his own glory and holiness is unchanging, Lister argues that his passions are not eternally static but are, rather, dynamic expressions of his character in the context of human events by virtue of his voluntary engagement within the created order (immanence). God is

neither passive toward creation, nor is he *actus purus* (pure actuality) such that his fatherly responsiveness to his creatures is but an illusion (157, n. 38). Rather, his voluntary engagement in creation results in a “relational mutability,” an idea to which Lister is dependent upon the work of Bruce Ware.

Lister organizes his argument into two major sections. The first section is primarily historical, tracing the development of impassibility by the patristic writers, through the medieval period, and to the modern theological scene largely dominated by passibilists. Lister’s purpose in this section is to show that the Fathers who initially developed the idea of impassibility did so, not under the sway of the Greek philosophical ideal of *apatheia* (as modern passibilists frequently allege), but rather in an honest effort to represent the teachings of Scripture. Further, Lister seeks to demonstrate that his two-pronged emphasis (divine impassibility and impassionedness) has been the common understanding of the majority of theologians in Christian history prior to the rise of passibilism in the modern era. Lister concludes his historical investigation with a critical analysis of modern passibilist thought.

The second division of Lister’s work is devoted to a biblical and theological defense of impassibility. The argument for impassibility in this section, the author is careful to point out, does not rest on a particular passage or collection of proof texts; rather, impassibility follows from the Scripture’s revelation about the character of God, the totality of which ought to inform the difficult passages that appear to attribute regret, repentance, jealousy, and affliction to God. Lister concludes his development of a qualified model of impassibility with a brief summary of its implications for Christology.

Overall, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned* makes a valuable contribution to the study of theology proper. Lister’s historical section examines the work of an impressive number of Christian theologians, patristic, medieval, and Reformed. Unfortunately, the breadth of his enquiry frequently results in less than inductive and rather brief treatments of certain key figures (e.g., Stephen Charnock’s work on impassibility, among the most extensive of post-Reformation theologians, receives only two and a half pages). Nevertheless, the wealth of primary and secondary literature supporting his discussions almost makes up for their brevity and offers the reader ample guidance for further study.

Lister interacts with a wide variety of relevant biblical texts, given the length of his study. And though he acknowledges that he has left more relevant texts untreated, the reader is left with a good idea of how they would fit into his argument. Perhaps the main strength of Lister’s study is the attention he devotes to grounding his argument within the relevant principles of theology proper (e.g., transcendence and immanence, the Creator/creature distinction, etc.). As a result, his work makes for a lucid treatment of man’s analogical likeness to God and provides a devastating critique of the theodicy that has given rise to modern passibilist thought. Finally, though written as a serious scholarly work, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned* does not fail to draw the reader’s affections to

the majesty of God reflected in his impassibility.

Kevin J. Sherman

*A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, by Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. xv + 1054 pp. \$60.00.

The renaissance of Puritan studies that has been underway for several decades has reached a significant milestone with the publication of *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* by Joel Beeke and Mark Jones. This monumental work is a veritable compendium of almost every theme addressed by the seemingly innumerable theological and practical treatises penned by the Puritans during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It represents as much of an exhaustive treatment of Puritan theology and practice as can be accommodated within a single volume. A particularly unique and helpful feature of this work is its organization of the major themes of Puritan theology around the loci of systematic theology, thus making it possible for students to examine Puritan conceptions of Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, etc. Moreover, the authors interact extensively with the most current scholarship, oftentimes challenging conclusions of such notable authorities as Carl Trueman and Michael Horton.

The theme occurring throughout this work is the Puritans' emphasis on the practical, and thus on the primary purpose of theology, which was, according to William Ames (1576–1633), "living to God." In other words, the main objective of doctrine was to enable the believer to live his or her life as an expression of worship to God in accordance with his Word. Due to the vastness of this volume, we will highlight select topics covered that might be of particular interest.

One of the earliest chapters (chapter 2) deals with Puritan hermeneutics and exegesis. There the authors show, among other things, how the Puritans' insistence on a Christological reading of the Old Testament served as one of the primary bases for their covenant theology. This Christological reading of the Old Testament, involving heavy reliance on typology, resulted in a conception of the literal sense that was very nuanced. Forthrightly rejecting the medieval method of discerning four different senses in Scripture (i.e., the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical meanings of a given passage), the Puritans contended that a biblical text conveyed only one sense, the literal sense. Yet, they maintained that the one literal sense contained two aspects: one literal, grammatical, and historical, and the other mystical or spiritual. The inclusion of a spiritual dimension within the literal sense enabled the Puritans to discern numerous Old Testament personages such as David, Solomon, Joseph, Noah, et al., as types of Christ.

As one would expect, Beeke and Jones devote several chapters to the Puritans' covenant theology. Throughout these informative chapters, they discuss in considerable depth the many features of each of the three covenants within this hermeneutical system: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Amid their detailed descriptions of the many features of covenant theology, the authors point out that this was by no means a monolithic system among the Puritans, as there were many different approaches to it. One of the most interesting chapters in this regard is chapter 17 dealing with the place of the Mosaic covenant within the larger context of covenant theology. Specifically, Beeke and Jones call attention to the challenge the Puritans faced in situating the Mosaic economy within the covenant of grace. This conundrum led many Puritans either to include it as an extension of the covenant of works, or as a different administration of the covenant of grace (this became the majority view). However, other Puritans, such as John Owen (1616–1683), being unsatisfied with either solution, made a further distinction within the covenant of grace between the Sinaitic covenant, as the “old covenant,” and the “new covenant” that took effect at the time of the gospel (this is the subject of chapter 18). These chapters on covenant theology make clear some of the difficulties within this system which many dispensationalists can appreciate, and which many of the Puritans themselves acknowledged.

Of particular relevance is the chapter on the Puritans and the Holy Spirit (chapter 27). In this chapter Beeke and Jones call attention to the central place the doctrine of the Holy Spirit occupied in the theologies of major Puritan divines such as Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680) and John Owen. Especially interesting is the discussion regarding Owen's conflict with Quakerism with respect to immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In dealing with this controversy, the authors point out that Owen identified the fundamental problem of the Quakers as their severance of the Spirit's work from the written Word, resulting in the elevation of the Spirit above it. It was Owen's contention (one that should be heeded by those professing Reformed soteriology while promoting the continuation of so-called extra-biblical prophecy) that to separate the Spirit's work from his instrumental use of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God is to jettison the foundational Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

Other important chapters in this work are those regarding justification (in which the authors show that many of the Puritans held to a type of “double justification”), eschatology (in which the authors observe that some Puritans, like Thomas Goodwin, subscribed to a future for national Israel), conscience (on which William Perkins wrote extensively), missions, preaching, and personal godliness.

In keeping with the spirit of their subjects, Beeke and Jones give specific applications for each of the doctrines discussed. Furthermore, the authors give a clear presentation of the gospel towards the end of this volume.

Notwithstanding what seems to be occasional a-historical stereotyping of the Conformists, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* is a magisterial achievement. Not only is this an invaluable resource to teachers, students, and scholars, but also pastors, missionaries, Christian workers, and other believers who wish to draw deeply from the rich and vital contribution the Puritans made to our spiritual heritage. The riches to be culled from this work are as inexhaustible as they are precious.

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