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Review: Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics: a Selection with Introduction

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be very well grounded indeed—but then Reformed churches have generally tried harder than most to produce such people.

Since Calvin nowhere gives a thorough explanation of his exegetical methods, scholars have expressed a wide diversity of opinions on what he intended to do and whether or not he succeeded. Puckett's "approach is based on [his] belief that Calvin reveals his method most clearly in the reasoning he offers for rejecting the interpretations of others" (p. 13). Though Calvin seldom names specific opponents, he frequently criticizes both Christian allegorists, who saw Christ everywhere in the OT, and Jews, who saw him nowhere. Yet he also adopts exegetical insights from both camps.

Because Calvin was committed to understanding the human side of Scripture, he utilized the new tools of humanistic scholarship, including the study of Hebrew and the Jewish commentators, to explain what OT texts meant to their original authors and readers. He was also convinced that the ultimate Author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit. The Bible, therefore, possesses an inherent unity, and it is entirely appropriate to find Christian meanings in OT passages.

How does Calvin harmonize these two approaches to the OT? Though he despises traditional allegorical methods (as practiced for instance by Origen), he recognizes that the authors of Scripture sometimes used extended metaphors, which might be called allegories. (One sticking point with modern dispensationalists is that he regularly interprets prophecies of the kingdom of Christ in an allegorical fashion.) Calvin also recognizes many divinely intended types of Christ, though he insists that the Christian significance of a passage must neither conflict with nor set aside the meaning it would have had for its first recipients. The Christological intention of the Holy Spirit is always an extension or outgrowth of its historical sense. In the case of direct prophecies relating to Christ, Calvin thinks that fair-minded readers ought to see that they reach far beyond any possible OT fulfillment.

This is an important and helpful study for several reasons. First, hermeneutics has rightly become a hot issue in evangelical circles. There is no sense in affirming an inerrant Bible if you can wash away all its uncomfortable parts by applying inappropriate hermeneutical principles. Second, this study helps to narrow the wedge that some scholars have tried to drive between Calvin and his spiritual descendants. In one of his many substantive footnotes Puckett concludes that Calvin's doctrine of inspiration is much more conservative than some scholars allow (pp. 45–47). Third, the extensive footnotes and bibliography, which include both American and European sources, provide excellent help for those who wish further to pursue the topic. Finally, perhaps this study will encourage a greater appreciation for Calvin's commentaries by pastors. I have found that they are nearly always worth consulting, and I often derive more help for sermon preparation from them than I do from modern works.

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Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics: A Selection with Introduction. Edited by Helmut Gollwitzer. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994, 262 pp., $14.99 paper.

Westminster/John Knox Press has done all teachers of theology and all who might in any way be curious about the theo-logical, Christocentric thinking of K. Barth a great service in reissuing Gollwitzer's selections from the ponderous *Church Dogmatics.* As helpful as, say, *Evangelical Theology* or *Dogmatics in Outline* are as texts for courses related to modern trends in theology, there is nothing like the *Dogmatics*

themselves for theological depth and for stirring, enlightening, surprising and sometimes aggravating argumentation. While one might wish that Gollwitzer include more on this or that issue, a thorough reading of the whole will lead not just to general satisfaction with Gollwitzer's overall format but to amazement at his sensitivity to Barth's own thinking and to Barth's own developing concerns. But Gollwitzer has given yet more. His introductory essay, which presents Barth's desire to "follow after" the Word in its historical context, is most helpful.

With Gollwitzer's introduction, most of the first half of the volume is rightly given over to Barth's interrelated and ultimately unitary emphases on the revelation of God and Jesus Christ. Gollwitzer's selections for and under each theological topic are taken from throughout the *Dogmatics*, and they do not necessarily follow the sequence given therein. Gollwitzer skillfully pieces together what inevitably results in a masterful development of Barth's thought. The same applies to sections on "Creation as Benefit," "The Determination of Man," and "Agape and Eros" among others. But for me the inclusion of Barth's (rarely recognized) formative section on "Nothingness," a topic more at the heart of his theological purpose than most realize, is the final positive selling point of this volume.

The effectiveness of this text for appropriate theology classes is obvious. Gollwitzer's multileveled contribution, through and with Barth's own theological expression, has given us, against all odds, a very useful and high recommended book.

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Inklings of Reality: Essays Toward a Christian Philosophy of Letters. By Donald T. Williams. Toccoa Falls: Toccoa Falls College, 1996, 275 pp., $14.00 paper.

Declaring that "Christians have always had to wrestle with what reading means," Williams proposes to look at "several key moments in the history of that wrestling in order to uncover the elements of a Christian philosophy of letters, a Biblical view of reading and its place in the Christian life."

He begins by describing how Thoreau, Frost, and Tolkien awakened him early in his life to this: "If I was going to be a philosopher, I would also have to be a poet." He then, curiously enough, examines Augustine's (a *theologian*!) doubts about belles lettres (a short but excellent analysis) and then goes on to Sidney, whose *Defense of Poesy* he calls "the fountainhead of modern Christian poetics" largely because of its emphasis on the conviction that God, the Maker, has made man, a maker, in his own image. He gives no thought at all to Sidney's didactic view of poetry as rhetorical device or to his view that the poet does not "imitate" nature or history, as Aristotle contended, but esthetically creates a work that "lieth not" because "it not affirmeth." He then examines Calvin's *Institutes* to show that Calvin quoted secular writers (Plato, Cicero, Seneca, *et al.*), not because he agreed with them but because "the ancient writers had stated well or memorably the ideas which Calvin is concerned either to propound or to refute." The chapter on John Foxe's long account of martyrs is a surprising inclusion, but Williams adroitly analyzes Foxe's understanding of the historian's "mission, method, and message" to show that a Biblical consciousness enabled him to make his large book into not merely a dictionary of deaths but a critical examination of the meaning of the gospel in history through the depiction of countless martyrdoms. His chapter on the Puritans R. Baxter and J. Bunyan rescues them from unpoetic gloom and prosaic dullness, but it is unoriginal.

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