

Christoph Stückelberger and Reinhold Bernhardt, eds. *Calvin Global: How Faith Influences Societies*. Globethics.net Series 3. Geneva: Globethics.net, 2009. Pp. 257.

This book was published in 2009 on the commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of John Calvin's birth. In the year 2017, with the five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's theses, it deserves to gain renewed interest. A compilation of thirteen articles on Calvin, the book begins by taking a close look at his thought and life and then considering how his theology spread globally, with some countries assessed for their reception of his thought.

The first article concerns Calvin's exegesis. He is rightly presented as an able biblical exegete. In fact, all the thoughts constructed in his magnum opus *Institutio* or applied in his pastoral ethics flow from here. Ekkehard W. Stegemann succinctly presents Calvin as a brief and lucid exegete, giving three examples of Calvin's treatment of Scripture. In the next article, Reinhold Bernhardt explores the heart of Calvin's theology: "Glory to God" in predestination and providential acts.

Shall we consider only what is good in Calvin and not what is problematic? What flaws in Calvin's ethics do we inherit? Perhaps it is not Calvin himself who is to be blamed, but Max Weber who misrepresents it in the socio-economic field. Christoph Stückelberger gives us an objective evaluation of Calvin, who can be claimed not as the father of capitalism, but rather as the father of a biblical economic ethics.

On the basis of chapter four's discussion of science, one cannot help but appreciate Calvin for accommodating to his age's cosmology. What Calvin "lacked" in science, he bountifully supplied in theological understanding in interpreting Moses's view of the cosmos.

Irena Backus in the subsequent article assesses two competing interpretations of Calvin's ideal view of women, one from the perspective of his wife and the other from that of his opponents.

On the continent of his birth, Calvinism has survived and managed to shape modernism. Georg Pfleiderer outlines the two theses of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch that seek to appropriate the Calvinistic tradition in modern times, but Calvinism as such is arguably overtaken by the development of the Goliath capitalist empire.

The account of the reception of Calvinism in various parts of the world makes for interesting reading. Some authors take a retrospective outlook and others make future projections from current struggles. One way or the other, the various perspectives are well accommodated to their historical

local developments.

James D. Bratt traces different historical strands of Calvinism taking root in North America; there is not just one type of Calvinism, but various threads that weave into the social fabric of the present theological terrain and society.

In the South African context, Calvinism is claimed by both oppressor and oppressed. As Piet Naude suggests, the need of the hour is for reconciliation and visible unity. In China's context, Aiming Wang notes that there is as yet no recognized influence of Calvin in the modern Chinese world; hence it is necessary to interact with Chinese traditional Confucianism in the modernization of China.

According to Meehyun Chung, Calvin's influence in Korea is misshapen by Puritanism and fundamentalism, since it came indirectly via "American styled churches." In her article "Calvinism in Korea without Calvin? A Women's Perspective," she claims that Calvin was repressive to women. However, this kind of objection is not dissimilar to the objection against Paul's view of slavery. It is a historically laden and unfair criticism that uses subjective, if not anachronistic criteria, which the author seems to acknowledge in the fifth section of her article.

The two subsequent articles deal with Calvin's political thought, a subject that has bred disagreement rather than consensus, whether on the relation between church and state, or on how active or passive the church should be politically. Yeon Kyuhong observes the tension between two "Calvin" groups in Korea, the conservatives and the radicals. Despite the tension, it is acknowledged that Calvin's theology contributed to democratization in Korea.

The last two chapters about Calvinism in Indonesia were appropriate when they were written, but they are now rather outdated. The tension between state and church is still present, which results in the hesitancy of Calvinist Christians to get involved in politics. However, the recent blasphemy trial and imprisonment of Ahok, the governor of Jakarta, has attracted media attention worldwide. This new track shows how a Calvinist Christian can be in the political arena, and it affects the non-Christians who stood both for and against him. Ahok himself, a staunch defender of the fifth principle of *pancasila* (social justice), acknowledges that it is an expression of Abraham Kuyper's thought, which was well received by the Indonesian founding fathers as one of the basic principles of the nation. Hence, Calvinist Christians need to stand upon their principles, already formulated in *pancasila*, that provide a strong platform for Christian political action.

In summary, the book offers a variety of perspectives, as expected with various global contributors with distinctive theological emphases. Still, it is

valuable reading for those who would explore Calvin and adaptations of Calvinism in different contexts in a postmodern, culturally sensitive era. These 257 pages worth of reading and reflection make a welcome contribution to Calvin and Reformation scholarship.

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Christine Schirrmacher. *“Let There Be No Compulsion in Religion” (Sura 2:256): Apostasy from Islam as Judged by Contemporary Islamic Theologians: Discourses on Apostasy, Religious Freedom and Human Rights*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016. Pp. 620.

Christine Schirrmacher, Professor of Islamic Studies at the Evangelisch-Theologische Faculteit in Louvain, Belgium, and teacher of Islamic Studies at the University of Bonn in Germany, is a leading specialist on Islam in the West today, author of numerous books and articles in several languages.

In this hefty work, termed a postdoctoral thesis by the publisher, the positions of three contrasting Islamic scholars on the topic of religious freedom and apostasy are excellently documented and presented. Foreign language sources, particularly Arabic, are usefully translated and analyzed and so made accessible. It gives a good idea of what the West is up against, although this is little recognized—the most blind are those who do not want to see.

The main issue of the work is problematic for any religious faith—the situation of those who fall away, how this state of declension should be considered, and what can or should be done about it. Behind these questions lies the fundamental issue: what sort of freedom is permissible to unbelievers, and what are the rights of freedom of conscience? These are questions with which the Christian tradition has struggled since the time of the Reformation, with different responses, and the positions of the three Islamic scholars examined here have their equivalents in Christianity. Let’s not forget Pierre Bayle and his criticism of Calvin and Beza! So the scope of this study, while it is highly specific, has universal import. The choice is also one that is compelling, given the global movement of Islamic populations and hence their exposure to different cultural situations. This question is highly relevant for those who now have on their doorstep Muslim neighbors whose religious motivations are incomprehensible to liberal, secularized politicians and media commentators who wish all Muslims were like Sadiq Aman Khan, the present Mayor of London.