Book Reviews

John Calvin. *Crucified and Risen: Sermons on the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ*. Translated by Robert White. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2020.

This volume is a new translation of several of the Reformer's Eastertime sermons. The first two were Sunday sermons, and the sermon on the resurrection was preached on Easter Sunday prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The intervening ones were weekday sermons. These were published in Geneva by Conrad Badius in July 1558. It is not the first time they have been translated into English, that being in 1581 and then again much later in 1950.

However, this new translation is well worth it. Firstly, Calvin's sermons are models of biblical masterclass, perhaps only equaled by Klaas Schilder's twentieth-century trilogy on the sufferings of Christ. Calvin concentrates on Matthew 26–28 in nine sermons, and there is a bonus sermon on the ascension on Acts 1:9–11. Calvin's final prayers are restored at the end of each exposition. Rounding things off, a Scripture index and a general index have been added.

Calvin follows his habitual homiletic practice of expository preaching. He does not comment on every verse but allows the main Scriptural texts to mold his theological comments in an ongoing argument that once transcribed has become highly readable. It is as if we are privileged to be present, listening to Calvin himself from his pulpit at Saint Pierre in Geneva.

Secondly, as to the content itself, as expected, we find rehearsed the main themes of Calvin's cataphatic Christology drawn out of the text of Scripture. Everywhere he is attentive to showing how Christ as the perfect man was conscious of his mission, obeying the Father in all things, thus fulfilling the

prophecies of Scripture. Nothing either said or done by Christ or by others in the passion accounts happens by chance. God hates sin, and Christ took our judgment upon himself in a once-for-all offering as the one Mediator. By his sacrifice, forgiveness of sin was procured and full atonement achieved. That no merit can be added to the work of Christ is a recurrent theme.

As a student of humanism Calvin was a master of rhetorical method. He knew how to touch his hearers by his use of language, which can both touch the heights of praise and reach into the depths of pathos. This is particularly so in what is perhaps the linchpin of the whole, the sermon on "It is finished," where Calvin deals with Christ's abandonment and the famous words "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Christ suffered in both body and soul since it was necessary that he should know and feel condemnation for us. Calvin comments, "There is no doubt that, being himself God, he could not have felt that this (the forsakenness) was so. No, but when he suffered, his deity had to give way to the death and passion which he had to bear. Hence his power kept itself hidden for a time, until he had done all that was required for our redemption" (115). These challenging and mysterious words are left hanging. Calvin makes no attempt to explain the mystery. He rather holds back for us to contemplate the wonder of it all.

In many places, we find accents similar to those of Luther's theology of the cross, describing how the glory of God's salvation is present in contrary appearances. So Christ brings life out of death, justice out of injustice, salvation out of condemnation.

While concentrating on the drama of redemption and the Father-Son relationship, Calvin is not insensitive to the human dramas being played out on the sidelines. The hardness of heart of the Jewish leaders, the dilemma of Pilate, the wicked choice of Barabbas by the crowd, the injustice of it all to accomplish the justice of God, and much more. A moving exposition describes the fate of Peter contrasted to that of Judas, the betrayal in the garden, and the denial when the cock crows. These dramas are vividly described, together with pastoral applications.

In the chapter "Numbered with the Transgressors" on Matthew 27:27–44, Calvin presents the enigma of the just among the unjust. While we might find his interpretation of the "place of the skull" strange (93), when we come to the two thieves, Calvin does not let us off the hook: "We see in these two men mirrors of the human race. We see the wretchedness which wraps us around. This life is a pit of misery, the fruit of our sins, for Adam's fall deprived us of God's blessing. … We must all return to dust and decay" (102). Throughout, Calvin speaks pastorally in this way, underlining sin and the glory of divine grace.

Thirdly, in a day of cheap paperbacks, it is a pleasure to hold a beautifully produced book such as this, since it does honor to the content, as does the translation. Robert White, who gave us Calvin's 1541 *Institutes* with the same publisher a few years ago, has once again done a fine job, including on his introduction to the volume, which is brief and to the point, as Calvin himself would have wished. White's translation does not fall foul to the snares of modern dynamic equivalence theory but sticks as closely as possible to the literal sense of the Reformer's original text. Only rarely, however, does one feel the French original underneath the English version, mostly in the translation of some of Calvin's reputed colloquial insults, which always present the challenge of knowing what to do with them.

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David J. Hesselgrave and Leanna Davis. *We Evangelicals and Our Mission: How We Got to Where We Are and How to Get to Where We Should Be Going*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020.

David J. Hesselgrave (1924–2018) was Professor of Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. Together with Donald A. McGavran, he was cofounder of the Evangelical Missiological Society. Through these positions, as well as his publications, Hesselgrave provided leadership to several generations of evangelical missiologists. He did not avoid tackling controversial topics. To mention an example: seeing that a holistic understanding of mission was gaining ground among evangelicals, he staunchly defended prioritism, the view that the primary goal of mission work is preaching the gospel, winning people to Christ, and growing responsible churches.

Blessed with longevity and a clear mind, Hesselgrave remained active in retirement. One of his last projects was writing the book *We Evangelicals and Our Mission* with the help of his granddaughter Leanna Davis. The book is a kind of final lecture series by the "dean of evangelical missiology," as he is often affectionately called. Once again, Hesselgrave champions prioritism, but he does much more. The book offers a combination of theology and missiology. It describes the historical roots of classic evangelical missiology and identifies the pitfalls that evangelical missiology will need to avoid if it wants to remain relevant for the church-gathering work of the Lord.