

through to completion in such a fine manner. Much of the presentations appear to have had only minor editorial adjustments to them compared to their original delivery, giving the essays a lively feel and tone; a very good move indeed. *Tributes to John Calvin* offers its readers a generous serving of Calvin's times, themes, and significance and as such promises to be a valuable and well used resource on Calvin scholarship. Read alongside the other volumes in The Calvin 500 Series, this is a major and significant publishing venture and will undoubtedly resource Reformed scholarship until the next major celebratory milestone of Calvin's life and thought comes along.

Myk Habets

Koester, Craig R. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. (xiv + 245 pp). [ISBN 9780802829382]

To speak of 'a theology of' something is not a particularly clear statement. A number of means could be intended regardless of what area of theology a person is referring to. For example 'a theology of mission' could refer to a theological mandate to practice mission, or it could mean a theological exposition of what mission is. It could refer to mission in scripture, mission in history, mission in contemporary thought, etc. The same is true of 'a theology of pastoral care' or 'a theology of Christian leadership.' However, this use of the term theology seems to miss the mark. To speak theologically is to speak primarily about God and about his involvement with the world. This is precisely what Craig Koester has done in his work. In the preface he writes, 'To read the Gospel theologically is to ask, Who is the God about whom Jesus speaks? Who does the Gospel say that Jesus is? And how does the Gospel understand life, death, sin, and faith?' (p. ix) This is precisely what one should expect when reading a book with the title *A Theology of John's Gospel*.

In this book Koester is able to cover most areas of theological interest within John's Gospel, and he does so in a clear and logical

manner. Following this introduction he starts, naturally, with what is most foundational, both in theology and in John's Gospel (chapter two: 'God'), then he moves to the scene in which God is going to act (chapter three: 'The World and Its People'). Following this he considers the primary character in God's engagement with the world (chapter four: 'Jesus'), and the primary action taken (chapter five: 'Crucifixion and Resurrection'). Then there is a discussion on the Holy Spirit who Koester rightly recognizes as the *Paraclete* who comes to continue the work that Jesus has begun. Finally in the last two chapters he considers the life of the believer, both while Jesus is still with them and their intended life once Jesus has ascended (chapter seven: 'Faith, Present and Future' and chapter eight: 'Discipleship in Community and World'). As such Koester skillfully develops his argument not unlike one might see in a systematic theology, but while remaining committed solely to the content and character of John's account. Here the 'ugly ditch' has been filled in by Koester's superior knowledge of both Scripture and doctrine, and by the way he is able to hold both together in the relationship they were always meant to have.

Koester does not shy away from the trickier theological elements, such as the atoning death of Christ. He considers fairly the various opinions, but concludes strongly that the death of Christ in John's account is primarily a revelation of God's love for the world (pp. 108-23). John 3.16 is quoted frequently throughout the book. His constant ability to expound *theologically* and not just *exegetically* is once again the major strength here. Koester has not just given a historical analysis, nor has he simply chosen from a list of atonement models in systematic theology that might best fit John's emphasis. Instead he has read the text as it desires to be read – as inspired word that informs the church both in history and today – and because of this a greater understanding of the text and of its theological content are brought out clearly.

On a more critical note, this book offers virtually no comparative analysis between John and the synoptic Gospels. The analysis of John's Gospel is good, and goes to significant depth. One comes away with a clear picture of John's message and theology. However, some more engagement with the other Gospels would

have further highlighted the uniqueness of John's particular emphasis. Among other things Koester has tried to appreciate specifically how John's Gospel understands the theological realities of this world (the atoning work of Christ being a case in point). By comparing and contrasting John with the synoptics this goal would have been achieved even more effectively.

The book is very readable, suitable for a popular audience, and contains a number of more practical comments and examples to help 'lay' readers come to a deeper understanding of John's Gospel. Also, ideas are often repeated in later chapters and helpfully explained again in connection to another theme in the Gospel. As such it is clear that Koester is not only trying to develop a scholarly argument, but is also keen to teach content to those less familiar with academic writing. Having said this, Koester does not skimp on theological depth and scholarly engagement, making this book useful for a wide audience. Scholars, students, pastors, preachers, small group leaders, and any other interested persons could benefit from reading this book.

Ian Goodman

Sally Lloyd-Jones. Illustrated by Jago. *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007 (351 pp.) [ISBN: 978-0-31-708254]

Children's Bible's follow a pretty standard format – simple language and basic pictures. In addition they make one of two decisions; either they are simply a selection of Bible stories that are edited down to a level of comprehension for children minus the theology, or they take biblical stories and turn them into little moral vignettes. *The Jesus Storybook Bible* certainly uses language appropriate for children, but it neither merely repeats the biblical stories minus the theology or turns the stories into moralistic teachable moments.

In the acknowledgments, Lloyd-Jones mentions the formative impact the ministry of Timothy Keller has had on her, and it