

catholicity of the Church, and 10) civil government as an instrument of God. Each point is dealt with judiciously and Hesselink shows his familiarity and mastery of Calvin's theology and writes as a seasoned sage. This is one of the best concise summaries of Calvin's theology one could hope to find.

The final section of the *Companion* entitled 'Calvin Today' includes four essays assessing the enduring legacy of Calvin, his theology, and his progeny. The final chapter is especially useful in assessing Calvin resources published between 1990 – 2004. This is a fitting conclusion to an extremely helpful *Companion* that offers insightful essays, lucid surveys, historical and theological studies, and as such orients students to the life and works of Calvin admirably.

## Myk Habets

**Francis S Collins. *The Language of God. A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. London: Free Press, 2006. 295 pp. hb. ISBN 978 0 7432 8639 8**

*The language of God* argues persuasively that Christian faith and science are compatible. Collins opens this work with an account of his childhood within a liberal family in rural Virginia, his parents stimulating an inquiring mind. Entering Yale University as an agnostic Collins committed himself to the study of biology he applied himself to the study of medicine and, seeking satisfaction in helping others was challenged by a dying woman as to what he believed. The author now entered a period of agonising uncertainty as spiritual concerns intruded his thoughts. He was helped when he read *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis (who had also been an atheist). His journey from atheism to belief in God follows as a fascinating story as he tells how this decision was based on faith in Jesus Christ.

The author posits the question whether, in this modern era of cosmology, evolution and the human genome it is possible to experience a richly satisfying unanimity with both a scientific and spiritual worldview. Accepting the common descent of all living creatures Collins rejects materialistic Darwinism. Just as family studies can demonstrate relationships, so genetic studies confirm human relatedness to the rest of living things. The author explains the human DNA profile, showing how it closely resembles that of

the chimpanzee and mouse. The author says that the eternal God is not threatened by scientific discoveries involving the natural world, for it was the Almighty who set physical limits just precisely right to allow the creation of galaxies, stars, the periodic table of elements, the planetary system, and life itself in its multitudinous and beautiful forms. The author throughout the book assents to a Christian worldview that believes in God and respects the findings of science.

Collins, with impressive scientific qualifications was appointed head the Human Genome Project, and therefore is uniquely qualified to present this elegant account of human genetics. The book details the captivating story of this complex task. Reflecting on the vast expanse of the DNA code of 3.1 billion letters arrayed across twenty-four chromosomes in each and every cell of our body the author deduced that this hidden four-letter code was known only to God. Collins then understood that this DNA code was the language of God that had an universal application in nature.

Collins believes that biology and medicine would be impossible to understand, and could not move forward, without considering this human relatedness to all other living things. He explains why Charles Darwin's framework of variation and natural selection is correct. The 'theory of evolution' does not imply uncertainty in scientific understanding.

This work challenges the reader to face the issue of science and her or his attitude to the Christian faith. In a lucid and readable style Collins explains why the principles of his faith complement the dictums of a science that he considers is trustworthy, progressive and self-correcting.

Collins then outlines the choices available to those seeking truth in this matter. Some persons like Richard Dawkins have resorted to agnosticism and atheism, sometimes aggressively employing evolutionary theory to counter theistic beliefs. The author considers the option of 'creationism' which, in his opinion, is hopelessly flawed and incompatible with our new knowledge and understanding of science. It is a blunder, Collins says, to mistake the Holy Scriptures for elementary textbooks in biology, astronomy, geology, or anthropology. Collins makes a case for all to be introduced to a reasoned and evidence based understanding of their Christian faith in concord with a scientific worldview.

The author likewise considers the option of ‘Intelligent Design’ and says it confuses the unknown with the unknowable, the unsolved with the unsolvable, a shortcoming that means it cannot qualify as a scientific theory. With great care Collins then shows why these latter postulates, accepted by some Christians do not equate with the truth discovered by science and should be left alone as they damage faith. The author says that part of the problem is that religious teachers and theologians often are uninformed about the findings of science.

Collins says “To the believer and scientist alike, I say there is a clear, compelling and intellectually satisfying solution to this search for the truth”. (p 195) The author calls this concept ‘Biologos’, the word of life, that incorporates an understanding of the origin of life and its subsequent development. Here God is allowed to have a rightful place in creation. This lesser known option warrants attentive study.

This book provides many answers for questioning minds. Collins says all should acknowledge the unimaginable intelligence and creative genius of God. The author justifies his claim that science and faith are reconcilable and do co-exist in harmony.

### **Ken Mickleson**

***The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology.* Eds. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 (x + 289 pp.) [ISBN 978-0-521-77662-2.]**

This *Companion* continues in the same vein as others in this series, offering an up-to-date and detailed survey of major thinkers and, as is the case here, significant periods in history. Eighteen chapters comfortably cover the Reformation period from late medieval theology through to the Council of Trent (approximately 1400–1650). The contributors will be household names to scholars and include a good selection of theologians and historians. Chapter entries include: Late Medieval Theology (Denis Janz), Lollardy (Wendy Scase), Hussite Theology (Thomas Fudge), Erasmus (Erika Rummel), Luther (Scott Hendrix), Melancthon (Sachiko Kusakawa), Lutheranism (Robert Kolb), Zwingli (Peter Stephens), Bucer (Ian Hazlett), The Theology of John Calvin (David