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#### **Errata**

There is an error on page 79 in the article by Nathan Rinne, “Paradise Regained: Placing Nicholas Hopman’s *Lex Aeterna* Back in Luther’s Frame,” *CTQ* 82 (2018). The last sentence of the second paragraph should read, “Even if they are born of a spontaneous love, the good intentions and works that characterize the ‘new man’ can be of a very impure love, still tainted by sin, even as that sin is covered by Christ’s blood.”

The Editors

## Book Reviews

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at the following address:  
[www.ctsfw.edu/ctq/reviews](http://www.ctsfw.edu/ctq/reviews)

***John Frederick the Magnanimous: Defender of Martin Luther and Hero of the Reformation.* By Georg Mentz. Translated by James Langebartels. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018. 144 pages. Softcover. \$14.99.**

I am glad that Concordia Publishing House has decided to translate and publish this work. The original German edition is difficult to access and, of course, takes more time and effort to read than does the English. This is just volume 1, so I look forward to volumes 2 and 3 that will describe John Frederick's years as elector and then ex-elector. This volume gives us his life before the death of his father (1532) as well as an appendix including 27 documents that provide the basis for the information in the text. However, I am not quite sure for whom CPH has chosen to publish this work other than myself. The subject is certainly worthwhile. Like his father (John the Constant) and his uncle (Frederick the Wise) before him, Elector John Frederick had an enormous impact on the course of the Lutheran Reformation and not just in Saxony. He was a leader in the Schmalkald League as well as ruler of electoral Saxony and just shortly after Luther's death, he fought—and lost—the Schmalkald War against the emperor, Charles V. Unfortunately, Mentz's work is not the best for today's readers.

For one thing, the original is quite old by scholarly standards. It came out in 1901, well over a century ago. History books are like most things: they go out of date after a while. Gradually, historians develop new sources, raise new questions, and provide new information for a particular subject like this one. For example, in 2006, the *Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte* devoted an entire volume to "John Frederick I—the Lutheran Elector," a collection of essays by contemporary historians who treat everything from the elector's role in the Schmalkald League to his pictorial representation by the Cranachs.

Of course, essays are no substitute for a biography but even in this respect, the volume at hand fails, i.e., if the publishers expect anyone to read it. First of all, the prose is pedestrian (well, okay, so is this review), just one fact laid out after another. Secondly, it assumes that the reader already knows a lot about the subject and especially his context. Consider this sentence, "We might wonder why the Hohenzollerns and not the Wettins gained the ascendancy in North Germany" (p. 17). I wonder about how many in 21st century America are still wondering

about this? Indeed, how many prospective readers are going to know who the Hohenzollerns were or the Wettins for that matter (John Frederick's family) or what is meant by "ascendancy in North Germany"? And, by the way, this is the first sentence of the first chapter! Nor is there a footnote in sight to help them. Likewise, what will prospective readers know about Charles V's efforts to make his brother King of the Romans or even why that was significant—let alone the nature of John Frederick's objection based upon the Golden Bull? Or how about the Pack Affair? And what about the young prince's library consisting of works like "the letters of Libanius, the *Instruction* of Aldus, and the grammar of Brassicanus" (p. 24)?

To be fair, there is the occasional explanatory footnote, but there aren't enough of them (Libanius, Aldus, and Brassicanus remain unidentified in the text although a *little* information is provided in the appendix, p. 97) and the notes that we do get aren't always that helpful. For example, regarding the Golden Bull, a footnote tells us that it was promulgated in 1356 and specified that "elections were to be handled by the seven electors . . . not by the Roman emperor" but does not tell us what the elections were for or that "the king of the Romans" was a title for the emperor's designated successor. We do get a footnote for this statement regarding John Frederick's books: "a Tristan was purchased for him at Michelmas 1515." It reads, "Reg. Bb. 4252. The reading is not completely certain" (p. 24). Now who is that supposed to help? On the same page, "Parzival" receives a useful identification in a footnote, so why not "Tristan"?

We need a good modern biography of John Frederick, but this isn't it. Of course, I certainly hope that there are potential buyers out there for this book. I really want CPH to succeed in making available hard-to-get and hard-to-read works of Reformation history. But I am just not sure how many buyers for this book will also turn out to be readers.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

***Faith That Sees Through The Culture.* By Alfonso Espinosa. St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018. 264 Pages. Softcover. \$14.99**

With *Faith That Sees Through The Culture*, Espinosa has supplied the church with an excellent resource for use in group study. The book is designed to be taught and discussed with other people rather than just read and contemplated by individuals. Each chapter concludes with a series of discussion questions designed to get the readers deeper into the meaning of what they just read and its implication for their lives as Christians.

As the title implies, the book offers a broad examination of how faith (as believed, taught, and confessed within the Lutheran tradition) shapes the Christian view of the world as well as the individual Christian's interaction with the world. This makes the book useful for use with those new to the Lutheran church as well as those with more experience in the pew.

Espinosa properly defines faith as a gift from God and not an exercise of will. It is this faith given by God that allows the Christian the proper vision to see through the claims made by the culture. More importantly it is the faith given by God that allows the Christian to see the God that is hidden in incarnation, word, and sacrament. While the book deals with some very weighty theological matters, Espinosa has succeeded in putting complex ideas into breezy accessible writing.

In each chapter Espinosa draws from the Scriptures, the Confessions, and other pertinent writings from Lutheran theologians as he explores his topics. In addition, Espinosa also features relevant stories from his many years as a parish pastor that illustrate how the different facets of Christian faith have played out in his life as well as the lives of those he has served. Some readers will resonate more with the stories while others will find more value in the doctrinal explanations but the presence of both throughout the book can only strengthen its usefulness at the parish level. In all, Espinosa's book should prove to be a valuable teaching tool for any Lutheran pastor.

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***Embracing Godly Character: The Christian Community's Response to a Godless Culture.* By Kenneth Kremer. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018. 200 pages. Softcover. \$14.99.**

In a relatively short book, Kenneth Kremer articulates some of the problems with secular culture, gives a succinct definition of godly character, and explains how such character exists. Kremer defines character as identity plus performance (in that order) and repeats this definition throughout the book. He contrasts it with a view of character that puts performance first. For him, a person's identity is given by God (in creating and redeeming the individual) and that is first and foremost in shaping an individual's character. Kremer stresses the importance of listening to the word of God, letting God shape a person's identity. Performance follows from a person's God-given identity.

Kremer's arguments are helpful in analyzing current trends and explaining how they do not encourage godly character. For example, he offers a helpful chart at the

end of his book which compares the fundamental assumptions behind Christian education with the assumptions of an education based on secular humanism. Furthermore, he offers a helpful analysis of the nature and timing of a shift in our culture's view of God and His Word. Kremer's analysis is therefore helpful for pastors in understanding their congregations, especially the younger members of those congregations.

Kremer attempts to pack a great deal into a short book and some of his points could use additional development. For example, the chart on education worldviews at the end of his book demonstrates that he could have written a good deal more on the basic assumptions of these different forms of education and how they form character. In addition, near the end of the book, in chapter twelve, Kremer discussed the need for people to communicate with one another through an analysis of the development of the internet. The chapter ended abruptly by raising a number of questions about the importance of having conversation with Jesus, with fellow Christians, and with non-believers. Kremer seems to be touching on an important point, but he could develop it more fully.

Kenneth Kremer offers a book which can be helpful in understanding the background for some cultural trends. It also encourages Christians to listen to the word of God, letting his word shape their identity and their performance for the purpose of having godly character. Kremer's book will be helpful for pastors to read as they seek to understand the worldviews influencing their people.

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***Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction.* By Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2018. 336 pages. Softcover. \$35.00.**

Torah, the Law of Moses, expresses the will of God. Wisdom guides the believer in how to live it. The two are intimately connected. That understanding undergirds Bartholomew and O'Dowd's thesis. Wisdom and Torah go hand in hand.

The focus of this book is on the theological interpretation of biblical wisdom literature. The authors limit their discussion to the three books that clearly meet the criteria, namely, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Their goal is to create a discussion that will ultimately result in a theology of Old Testament wisdom. They begin with a general introduction, which is followed by a very helpful discussion of the similarities and the differences between the wisdom theology of the Bible and that

of the Ancient Near East. Furthermore, they compare and contrast the wisdom of Egypt with that of Mesopotamia. The Egyptian worldview subsumed all of creation into a harmonious substance while that of Mesopotamia lived in polytheistic naturalism. While pagan wisdom assumed polytheism, chaos, and the violent clash between the gods and nature, Israelite wisdom declared that God is not part of creation and is *ipsum esse subsistens*. Therefore, wisdom is not to be founded on human observation of nature and its processes, but is grounded in the fear of Yahweh.

Following a helpful section on Hebrew poetry, which would be valuable to any one studying the Old Testament, the authors outline Proverbs and give the reader an overview. Rather than understanding Proverbs as teaching a cause and effect dynamic, they argue that a character-consequence structure is more in keeping with the teaching of Proverbs. The foundation of that character is the fear of Yahweh. It is encouraging that they uphold Solomonic authorship of the sections assigned to Solomon. The following chapter is a deeper investigation of Proverbs 31, seeking to understand how it serves the theological purpose of the book as a whole.

The authors' treatment of Job takes the historicity of Job seriously. The echoes of the creation accounts in Genesis are clearly brought out in the discussion. Helpful charts showing parallels between Job and Genesis are enlightening. It was a delightful surprise to read the way in which the suffering of Job and the sufferings of Christ were held up and compared, especially how Job, like Christ, intercedes for others, even those who challenged him. The follow-on chapter is an in-depth reading of Job 28, which asks where wisdom can be found. The answer includes ties to the writings of Paul.

Ecclesiastes is the final book treated at any length. The authors reject Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes, placing the book within the postexilic period, as late as the fourth century B.C. Nevertheless, treating Qoheleth as a Solomonic figure, they argue that the problem with Qoheleth is not found in his observations but in his methodology. The issue is not solved until the epilogue, where it is resolved in fearing God and keeping his commandments. A treatment of the well-known and often misinterpreted Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 follows. The book next moves to a discussion of Jesus as the Wisdom of God, followed by chapters on the theology of Old Testament Wisdom and its application in the world today.

For the person desiring a deeper study of the topics presented, the authors provide a ready bibliography for recommended reading with introductory studies, commentaries, and scholarly resources. These are very helpful. While this book is a good start for the development of a theology of Old Testament wisdom, and while the connection to the creation accounts in Genesis are excellent, it suffers from its failure to ground the study more deeply in Deuteronomy. Applying Torah to the

new situation of living in Ertz Yisrael is exactly what Moses is doing. Some discussion of that should have been included.

This book can be a helpful tool for the person preparing a Bible study on any of the three wisdom books. Paired with the commentaries in the *Concordia Commentary* series, this book can simplify the work. It would also be a good text for a continuing education course on wisdom literature.

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***Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and Its Scripture-Centered Proclamation.* By Robert Kolb. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. 528 pages. Hardcover. \$50.00.**

Robert Kolb is the American master of all things Lutheran in the 16th century, the unofficial “dean” of Luther studies. In this volume he sets forth a comprehensive look at the biblical exegesis of Luther, his Wittenberg colleagues, and their 16th-century heirs, leading up to the 1580 Book of Concord. Kolb intends his book to be a bibliographical guide to a genre of theological literature that has been neglected: biblical commentaries and sermons by people other than Luther. The book also focuses on the theology set forth in these writings.

Chapter 1 deals with pre-reformation exegesis. Chapters 2–7 handle Luther’s theology, view of the Bible, hermeneutics, Bible commentaries, preaching, and German translation of the Bible. Kolb busts some myths. The change from medieval to Lutheran exegesis did not mean the rejection of allegory; instead, allegory served to illustrate, though not to prove doctrine. Lutherans saw New Testament exegesis of the Old Testament as instructive for their own, and so types of Christ and His Church were identified even where the New Testament did not explicitly identify them, such as Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. All preachers (and homiletics students) should read pp. 185–191, on Luther’s preaching advice.

The rest of the book (ch. 8–14) is about the understudied theologians who worked alongside or in collaboration with Luther, and the next generation that had learned from Luther and Melancthon. In my estimation, these chapters are the best in the book and cannot be found anywhere else. Exegetes of the late Reformation preserved and also extended the exegetical heritage they had received from the Reformers.

Throughout the book, Kolb repeats certain assertions that function as recurring themes of the book. Luther stood at the center of the “Wittenberg team;” antitheses



between his theology and that of his circle have been exaggerated in the past century. Luther's exegesis did not undergo a Reformation breakthrough; it changed gradually throughout the 1510s (34). Yet there was a Reformation turn, and it was a turn away from ritualistic religion to a religion of God's Word and trust in it, a conversation between God and his human creatures (37–39). Luther conceived of salvation as “recreation” brought about by the Word of God. The Word comes to human beings in various forms, and when Kolb speaks of the sacraments, he normally calls them “sacramental forms of the Word.” The law is God's constant plan and will for human life, not just a word of accusation. Kolb asserts in a few places that for Luther, Christ made atonement by his death, but *not* by his active obedience to God's Law (e.g., 444–45). (How this assertion fits with contrary statements of Luther, such as LW 68:39–40, Kolb does not explain here.)

No book can cover every detail. What I would have liked to see, but did not, was more detail on Luther's hermeneutics. For example, how were Melancthon's four rhetorical categories (257, 259) used in exegesis and preaching? Often when Kolb sets forth to describe hermeneutics, he instead summarizes the theology of Luther and other exegetes (e.g., 98–131, 195–207). This, as a rule of faith, was one aspect of hermeneutics, to be sure. But I would have appreciated more detail on how the rule of faith actually controlled and guided exegesis as a hermeneutic.

Yet not even a book this size can be comprehensive, and Kolb's goal was not to be exhaustive, but to show us what is out there. What he accomplished is astounding. The hope is that future generations will search out the buried treasures of Lutheran exegesis in the 16th century, for which Kolb has given us an excellent map.

Benjamin T. G. Mayes

***Luther's Christological Legacy: Christocentrism and the Chalcedonian Tradition.* By Johannes Zachhuber. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2017. 148 pages. Hardcover. \$15.00.**

Commemorating the 2017 Reformation anniversary, Marquette University invited Johannes Zachhuber of Oxford to speak on Martin Luther for its annual Père Marquette lecture. Zachhuber, a Lutheran, noted the invitation to speak on Luther at a Jesuit university as a sign of ecumenical progress. In his presentation he frames remembrance of the Reformation as a resource for individuals making religious decisions. As in the Reformation, so today religious identity is more reliant on individual decisions than enculturation (11–17).

Zachhuber's topic in this book is the centrality of Christology in Luther's theology and more broadly in Christian thought. While acknowledging that Luther

did not write a theology in systematic form, Zachhuber identifies Christology as a kind of lynchpin that holds the various strands of Luther's theology together. Luther's Christology is built on three encounters that Zachhuber identifies from a survey of Luther's writings: the encounter of the believer with the suffering Jesus, the encounter of God in Jesus, and the encounter with the victorious Christ. Zachhuber argues that the points of Luther's Christology stand in tensional unity within a soteriological framework (27–29).

If, as Zachhuber argues, Christ's person is at the heart of all Christianity, and Luther holds his Christology to be Chalcedonian, then a central question of the book arises: how can Luther's insistence that traditional Christology be at the heart of theology lead to divisions within the church (18–24)? Zachhuber's answer is carefully nuanced. On the one hand, Zachhuber places Luther within a traditional theological framework. While Luther's soteriological concern leads him to push against the limits of Christology, this very tension between soteriological proclamation and the technical aspects of Christology is present already in the early church (94). On the other hand, Zachhuber argues that Luther's emphasis on soteriological concerns results in a cavalier attitude towards the coherence of Christology. In particular, Luther pushes the theopaschite formula further than traditionally done to insist on the reality of God suffering in Christ (51–53). Thus, Luther's cavalier attitude towards the coherence of Christology leads to divisions within the church as his opponents object to the incoherence they identify in Luther's Christology (130–137).

Underlying this argument is Zachhuber's view that doctrinal formulas are attempts to give a rational account of the Christian life that never quite map precisely onto the reality they seek to express (125–137). This view leans toward George Lindbeck's analysis of an "experiential-expressivist" theory of doctrine in *The Nature of Doctrine*, according to which doctrines express religious experience rather than propositional truths. While Zachhuber does not neatly fit within Lindbeck's category, the critical point is that the view of doctrine as a second-order task gives Zachhuber space to argue that Luther upholds soteriological proclamation of Christ aimed to promote the reality of the Christian life at the expense of the subtle technicalities of Christological doctrine. Should one see doctrine as something other than a second-order reflection on Christian experience, then Zachhuber's proposed gap between soteriological need and technical reflection may shrink accordingly.

The proposed gap might shrink further if Luther's Christology is placed alongside scholastic Christology. While Zachhuber admirably surveys Luther's key Christological works and relates Luther to the early church, he gives less attention

to Luther's relationship to the scholastics. Zachhuber predominately argues that Luther rejects scholastic Christologies as too technical for the needs of faith and Christian life. While this position is standard, Zachhuber's argument might look different if it conversed with recent works, such as Graham White's *Luther as Nominalist* and David Luy's *Dominus Mortis*, which offer different perspectives on Luther's relation to the nominalists and his position on the suffering of God. If, as these works suggest, there is greater coherence in Luther's Christology than Zachhuber grants, then Luther is more successful in reconciling the posited divide between doctrinal precision and the needs of Christian faith and life.

With those observations made, this short book is recommended to pastors working to apply doctrine to life, particularly to work out what it means that Christ and his person are at the center of theology, a place accorded to Christ in the Smalcald Articles and the Augsburg Confession. The centrality of Christ in Luther's thought analyzed in this book serves as a model for pastors aiming to put Christ in the center of all that they do.

Aaron Moldenhauer

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***The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics.* By Jonathan King. Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2018. 424 pages. Softcover. \$24.99.**

Significant contributions have been made in recent decades to the relationship between theology and the topic of beauty (theological aesthetics). Jonathan King's *The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics* continues this rich field of study. However, what is of particular value is the impressive program of research he submits in defense of C. Caverno's contention that the Bible "is everywhere inspired and writ in an atmosphere of aesthetics" (7).

This defense is timely. Considerable amount of contemporary effort devoted to theological aesthetics engages with what the topic of beauty offers to theological discourse, specifically biblical and systematic theology. Perhaps what has been neglected, however, is what biblical and systematic theology offers to the topic of beauty. King's work then is certainly welcome.

King's outline of enquiry is of great value. Sensitive to those who are entering this conversation, he introduces the topic by way of a survey defining what theological aesthetics is and its various avenues of investigation. This is followed by an explanation of what he considers are the "christological contours" of his program of research (22). These contours appear as subsequent chapters giving attention to the dimensions of beauty located in the Trinity and their manifestation

in the theatre of man's existence: creation, incarnation, cross, and re-creation. Of further assistance is an appendix detailing the textual evidence of beauty throughout sacred scripture.

King's project is to be commended not only for its extensive biblical and systematic scope, but also for the assembly of theologians with whom he dialogues. However, Lutheran considerations are noticeably absent. This is not necessarily a critique of King; it is instead an encouragement for Lutheran theologians to enter the conversation. King's work certainly provides an attractive invitation for his Lutheran readers.

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Scotland

### **Reviews Published Online at: [www.ctsfw.edu/ctq/reviews](http://www.ctsfw.edu/ctq/reviews)**

*Remember the Poor: How the Earliest Christians Cared for the Needy.* By Matthew C. Harrison. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018. 80 pages. Softcover. \$6.99. (Paul E. Deterding)

*From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research.* By Michael Kibbe. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2016. 152 Pages. Paperback. \$14.00. (Gifford Grobien)