

finds in Einstein and Polanyi an epistemological understanding he recognises as being true of theology and helpful for its articulation.

Rather astonishingly, Habets alleges Torrance offers minimal treatment of Jesus' human life and no discussion of the role of the Spirit in the incarnation or Christ's sanctifying of humanity – see the relevant sections in *Incarnation* (e.g. pp. 116–38) or *Theology in Reconstruction* (esp. pp. 246–9). In suggesting Torrance's lack of an adequate pneumatology, Habets also fails to note Torrance specifically argues that the 'radical reconstruction of christology' he advocates 'does not seem possible . . . without a far deeper and more exacting pneumatology' (*Incarnation*, p. 86).

Such points, together with Habets' characterisation of Torrance as a mystical theologian (albeit *sui generis*) in spite of Torrance's emphatic disavowals, raise the question of whether Habets' impressive mastery of his corpus is not more rationalistic and less rational than it could be, and less fine-tuned. If all knowledge of God is through his Word, with no bypass, it would be better, and more of a challenge, to see how the features that Habets uses to characterise Torrance as mystical in fact point to a deeper understanding of what Torrance means by 'rational'. 'Rational' and 'non-mystical', for Torrance, are essentially part of what it means to have doxological, trinitarian-christocentric knowledge of God, and neither mean that God is not far greater than our words can indicate.

On a different note, it is a pity this otherwise very handsomely produced volume is bedevilled by formatting spacing irregularities, particularly in the footnotes.

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Shao Kai Tseng, *Karl Barth's Infralapsarian Theology: Origins and Development, 1920–1953* (Downer's Grave: IVP Academic, 2016), pp. 317. \$39.00.

It is a rare book that begins with the acknowledgement that its central thesis may be wrong. In this regard, *Karl Barth's Infralapsarian Theology* is a rare book indeed. Shao Kai Tseng, assistant professor of systematic theology at China Evangelical seminary in Taiwan, is convinced that Karl Barth is primarily an infralapsarian, and he makes his case throughout the book by means of careful, relentless readings of key texts in Barth's opus. But the Foreword to the book, written by George Hunsinger (Tseng's erstwhile master's thesis adviser at Princeton Theological Seminary), features a resounding defence of the consensus view (held by most Barth scholars and Barth himself), namely, that in light of Barth's reimagined doctrine of election the character of his

theology is essentially (though by no means exclusively) supralapsarian. Tseng's effort is commendable, creative and powerful, in Hunsinger's view, but there is an inescapable 'nevertheless' to Tseng's thesis which is woven throughout Barth's mature theology. Hunsinger then proceeds to offer several specific examples to underscore the point.

For those who haven't been trafficking in lapsarian circles lately, a review of the key terms may be in order. Did God decide to elect some humans and reject others prior to the Fall (supralapsarianism) or in response to it (infralapsarianism)? Would the second person of the Trinity become incarnate no matter what (supralapsarianism) or is the incarnation necessary only because of human sinfulness (infralapsarianism)?

To complicate matters further, Professor Tseng has a very specific definition of these terms in mind – those articulated by the leading voices of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. In Tseng's view, the 'fundamental and quintessential' definitions rooted in that historical soil are these: 'supralapsarianism is the position that the object of God's electing grace is neutral, unfallen humanity, while infralapsarianism contends that the object of divine election is God's eternal conception of fallen humanity' (p. 41). The first chapter of the book is therefore devoted to a survey of Reformed orthodox texts on the topic, highlighting the nuance often overlooked in later definitions of infralapsarianism: seventeenth-century infralapsarians thought the object of God's election was God's *conception* of humanity as sinful, not *actual* fallen humanity. The second chapter analyses §33 of CD II/2, the text that features Barth's most sustained engagement with Reformed orthodoxy on the lapsarian question, ably demonstrating that Barth did not take up lapsarian language with careful attention to the intricacies of the classic definitions, and therefore may not be reliable when he designates his own position as 'supralapsarian' (at least, if the seventeenth-century definitions are what one has in view). Chapters 3 to 8 move chronologically through a number of Barth's writings from the second Romans commentary to CD IV/1, tracing the development of Barth's thought vis-à-vis lapsarian concerns using the historic Reformed orthodox definitions as a rubric, concluding in each case that Barth is 'basically' an infralapsarian, albeit always with some supralapsarian elements. A strength of these chapters is that they consider lapsarian questions in relation to some surprising loci; for example, Tseng offers rich analysis of the infralapsarianism inherent in Barth's understanding of revelation.

So, does Tseng demonstrate that Barth is 'basically' infralapsarian, as he sets out to do? No. Given Tseng's 'fundamental and quintessential' definition of infralapsarianism ('the object of divine election is God's eternal conception of fallen humanity'), it is difficult to see how Jesus Christ as the object of election fits that description. But Tseng does succeed in demonstrating that

Barth's infralapsarian tendencies are pervasive, significant and enduring, and this is a major accomplishment.

Like all rubrics, seventeenth-century supralapsarian/infralapsarian categories reveal some things well, but obscure others. Tseng has written an illuminating study which invites us to consider an unexplored dimension of Barth's theology, and merits a wide readership. By demonstrating the difficulty of explaining Barth's doctrine of election in these confining terms, however, the book may also prompt the creation of some new categories which may better account for all the times Barth follows where scripture leads, charitably but determinedly colouring outside seventeenth-century lines.

It is a rare book that begins with the acknowledgement that its central thesis may be wrong, but maybe it shouldn't be. By including Hunsinger's reservations in the Foreword, *Karl Barth's Infralapsarian Theology* invites ongoing theological conversations that are both intense and gracious. As such, this would make an excellent book for inclusion in a course on Barth's theology, perhaps paired with a book that offers a robust account of the consensus view.

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Kimlyn J. Bender, *Confessing Christ for Church and World: Studies in Modern Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), pp. 391, \$42.00.

This interesting and instructive collection of twelve essays, some previously published, seeks 'to reflect on what it means to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in our day' (p. 11). A Baptist theologian at Baylor University, Bender's reflections here mostly take the form of controversial theology. That is, he brings a sophisticated knowledge of Karl Barth's theology (evident in his well-received book on Barth's ecclesiology published in 2013) to bear critically upon different theologies.

The first and third essays take on 'evangelical-catholic' ecclesiology, as represented by Reinhard Hütter, Joseph Mangina and others (including, in a minor way, this reviewer). Unlike Barth, they overemphasise the institutional church and tend to identify Christ and church too closely. The second and fourth essays discuss the theology of Evangelicalism. Acknowledging the diversity of this complex and important movement, Bender probes its differences from Barth, and points out some areas it may have in common with him over against Roman Catholicism. Another essay discusses Baptist theology, particularly its ecclesiology, noting Barth's growing appreciation