

Randall C. Zachman. *John Calvin As Teacher, Pastor and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought.*

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. 278 pp. index. bibl. \$24.95. ISBN: 0-8010-3129-X.

Randall Zachman's new work on Calvin gathers together his published articles on Calvin's thought. The majority of the articles were published between 1997 and 2003, though one is very early, dating to 1990. If the value of the new book was exhausted by the convenience of this collection, then handiness would be its greatest significance. Happily, that is not the case. Instead, Zachman's ordering of topics and skillful inclusion of two previously unpublished articles transforms this from a simple collection of articles into a significant argument about the meaning and method of Calvin's theology.

Zachman breaks the book into two sections: “Calvin as Teacher and Pastor” includes the first seven chapters, and the second section, “Calvin as Theologian,” includes the final five chapters. This division represents Zachman’s insight that Calvin, in his own person, combined two offices of the Church, which he very carefully separated in theory, those of pastor and teacher (or doctor). The first section of the book sets out Calvin as holding these two offices simultaneously, while the second gets further into his theological method.

The first chapter sets out the life and work of Calvin biographically, considering briefly his influences and the issues he faced. The second chapter takes up Calvin’s relationship with Philip Melancthon, who the author clearly sets out as Calvin’s most significant contemporary theological interlocutor. Chapter 3 discusses how Calvin supplied guidance for reading scripture, and chapter four considers the purpose and function of Calvin’s *Institutes*. The fifth chapter addresses Calvin’s exegetical method, while the sixth considers Calvin’s catechetical directions for the children of Geneva, and the seventh tackles the link between extracting biblical meaning and application in the lives of believers. Thus, the chapters of the first section give the reader an idea of who Calvin was, who influenced him in his self-conception, and then how his work flowed from that, especially in the consideration of scripture in the minds and lives of believers.

In the second section, the eighth chapter takes up Calvin’s and Luther’s ideas of word and image, finding Calvin far more open to an emphasis on imagery in the lives of believers, an idea Zachman expands in the ninth chapter on manifestation and proclamation in Calvin’s thought. The tenth chapter focuses on Calvin’s analogical method, and links it to his theology’s analogical movement; the eleventh and twelfth chapters consider two images of God in Calvin’s thought, the universe and Jesus Christ. Hence, the second section clearly sets out a model of Calvin’s thought which is not well-represented in the literature, Calvin as the contemplative theologian.

Throughout, Zachman presents a paradigm of historical theology. His notes are clear, his reasoning is careful, no assertions dangle in the breeze without textual warrant. The arrangement of the chapters of the book, and addition of chapters 6 and 8 create a text that can serve as a theological introduction to John Calvin, but one that seeks to make a discernible argument, that Calvin is best understood as a theologian seeking to read scripture with the Church, and that his thought has a deeply contemplative cast. Finally, it is worthwhile noting that as one reads these articles again, the reader is struck by just how often terms and turns of phrase that Zachman popularized have become basic vocabulary for the modern academy in Calvin studies. This volume has excellence for both novices and the adept; while the author has chosen not to say everything, this choice has allowed him to say two things quite well.

R. WARD HOLDER  
Saint Anselm College