

the majesty of God reflected in his impassibility.

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*A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, by Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. xv + 1054 pp. \$60.00.

The renaissance of Puritan studies that has been underway for several decades has reached a significant milestone with the publication of *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* by Joel Beeke and Mark Jones. This monumental work is a veritable compendium of almost every theme addressed by the seemingly innumerable theological and practical treatises penned by the Puritans during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It represents as much of an exhaustive treatment of Puritan theology and practice as can be accommodated within a single volume. A particularly unique and helpful feature of this work is its organization of the major themes of Puritan theology around the loci of systematic theology, thus making it possible for students to examine Puritan conceptions of Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, etc. Moreover, the authors interact extensively with the most current scholarship, oftentimes challenging conclusions of such notable authorities as Carl Trueman and Michael Horton.

The theme occurring throughout this work is the Puritans' emphasis on the practical, and thus on the primary purpose of theology, which was, according to William Ames (1576–1633), "living to God." In other words, the main objective of doctrine was to enable the believer to live his or her life as an expression of worship to God in accordance with his Word. Due to the vastness of this volume, we will highlight select topics covered that might be of particular interest.

One of the earliest chapters (chapter 2) deals with Puritan hermeneutics and exegesis. There the authors show, among other things, how the Puritans' insistence on a Christological reading of the Old Testament served as one of the primary bases for their covenant theology. This Christological reading of the Old Testament, involving heavy reliance on typology, resulted in a conception of the literal sense that was very nuanced. Forthrightly rejecting the medieval method of discerning four different senses in Scripture (i.e., the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical meanings of a given passage), the Puritans contended that a biblical text conveyed only one sense, the literal sense. Yet, they maintained that the one literal sense contained two aspects: one literal, grammatical, and historical, and the other mystical or spiritual. The inclusion of a spiritual dimension within the literal sense enabled the Puritans to discern numerous Old Testament personages such as David, Solomon, Joseph, Noah, et al., as types of Christ.

As one would expect, Beeke and Jones devote several chapters to the Puritans' covenant theology. Throughout these informative chapters, they discuss in considerable depth the many features of each of the three covenants within this hermeneutical system: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Amid their detailed descriptions of the many features of covenant theology, the authors point out that this was by no means a monolithic system among the Puritans, as there were many different approaches to it. One of the most interesting chapters in this regard is chapter 17 dealing with the place of the Mosaic covenant within the larger context of covenant theology. Specifically, Beeke and Jones call attention to the challenge the Puritans faced in situating the Mosaic economy within the covenant of grace. This conundrum led many Puritans either to include it as an extension of the covenant of works, or as a different administration of the covenant of grace (this became the majority view). However, other Puritans, such as John Owen (1616–1683), being unsatisfied with either solution, made a further distinction within the covenant of grace between the Sinaitic covenant, as the “old covenant,” and the “new covenant” that took effect at the time of the gospel (this is the subject of chapter 18). These chapters on covenant theology make clear some of the difficulties within this system which many dispensationalists can appreciate, and which many of the Puritans themselves acknowledged.

Of particular relevance is the chapter on the Puritans and the Holy Spirit (chapter 27). In this chapter Beeke and Jones call attention to the central place the doctrine of the Holy Spirit occupied in the theologies of major Puritan divines such as Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680) and John Owen. Especially interesting is the discussion regarding Owen's conflict with Quakerism with respect to immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In dealing with this controversy, the authors point out that Owen identified the fundamental problem of the Quakers as their severance of the Spirit's work from the written Word, resulting in the elevation of the Spirit above it. It was Owen's contention (one that should be heeded by those professing Reformed soteriology while promoting the continuation of so-called extra-biblical prophecy) that to separate the Spirit's work from his instrumental use of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God is to jettison the foundational Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

Other important chapters in this work are those regarding justification (in which the authors show that many of the Puritans held to a type of “double justification”), eschatology (in which the authors observe that some Puritans, like Thomas Goodwin, subscribed to a future for national Israel), conscience (on which William Perkins wrote extensively), missions, preaching, and personal godliness.

In keeping with the spirit of their subjects, Beeke and Jones give specific applications for each of the doctrines discussed. Furthermore, the authors give a clear presentation of the gospel towards the end of this volume.

Notwithstanding what seems to be occasional a-historical stereotyping of the Conformists, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* is a magisterial achievement. Not only is this an invaluable resource to teachers, students, and scholars, but also pastors, missionaries, Christian workers, and other believers who wish to draw deeply from the rich and vital contribution the Puritans made to our spiritual heritage. The riches to be culled from this work are as inexhaustible as they are precious.

André A. Gazal