

as a later theological reflection were added by a redactor. Kang observes exact parallels of Yahweh war in the ancient Near Eastern concept of divine war, including the participation of the ark of the Lord and the cultic praise of the divine warrior after battle.

The book has an excellent bibliography (pp. 225-235) and helpful indices. This scholarly study expands the horizon of the biblical theologian by placing the Bible narratives in their larger historical context of the warfare of the ancient Near East. While surprisingly common motifs are discovered, it is the necessary task of the Christian scholar to identify also the unique distinctives of the biblical record and of Israel's religious concepts.

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HANS K. LARONDELLE

Leith, John H. *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. 230 pp. \$16.95.

*John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* covers much more than the reformer's ethics or spirituality. In this work the author tries to interpret the whole of Calvin's theology from the standpoint of the life of the Christian. Leith is convinced that the key to the understanding of this man's thought is not some doctrine, such as the sovereignty of God or predestination, but his practical concern to explain how God goes about recreating his image in human beings—a position fully justified in the light of Calvin's career at Geneva. Besides providing a new approach to Calvin's theology, the book has a refreshing tone because of the author's willingness to acknowledge inconsistencies and contradictions in a theology which is usually presented as a masterpiece of rigorous logic.

Leith's central thesis is that for Calvin the Christian life involves much more than a code of morals or a pattern of conduct. It is really "a personal response to the gracious and personal activity of God in their lives" (p. 25). This concept also becomes the norm by which he judges Calvin's ideas. It brings to mind a key theme of Encounter Theology, which had much influence at the time when the work was first produced as a dissertation in 1949.

One is amazed at how much Leith can pack into 224 pages. For instance, in his first chapter he manages to include brief but enlightening discussions of Calvin's ideas on the glory of God, his law, scriptural inspiration and authority, repentance, mortification, vivification, and eschatology. In fact, the reader at times feels a little out of mental breath by the pace of the material covered.

Although Leith shows an excellent command of all aspects of the debates about Calvin, he depends largely on primary material and quotes

little from secondary sources. In fact, this book constantly provides Calvinian gems of thought. In a footnote (p. 90), for instance, Leith brings out Calvin's enlightening distinction between "justification without works," which is correct, and "justification by faith without works," which is false, because faith without works is void.

On the rather heated debate over Calvin's attitude toward inerrancy, Leith takes a mediate position: inerrancy in matters of morals and doctrine, the possibility of errors in reference to history and science. While he finds many inconsistencies in Calvin's treatment of predestination, he cautions the reader against approaching this subject as the rational conclusion of Calvin's view of the power and wisdom of God, which makes predestination an intolerable belief. Rather, it must be understood in the context of Christian experience, explainable only as the product of divine grace.

Leith is quite critical of Calvin's teaching on church discipline, in which he finds an inconsistency between Calvin's insistence on the free activity of God in the heart through the Spirit and his creation of a legal institution in which fallible human minds were supposed to be infallible interpreters of God's will as revealed in scripture.

In the section on social relationships in the last chapter, Leith quite carefully considers Calvin's ideas of the mutual duties of masters and servants, subjects and kings, rich and poor, Christians and enemies during war; but somehow he omits any reference to man and woman or husband and wife, a reminder that this issue was still dormant when the material was written.

Quite a few readers will take issue with the key thesis of the book and Leith's accusation of legalism and inconsistency whenever Calvin finds definite propositions, laws and polity, in scripture. He seems to forget that one of Calvin's key ideas is that God never speaks to man apart from scripture and that, therefore, it must be the goal of the Christian to find the truth in the sacred pages. To fault Calvin for believing that he possessed "infallible truth" (p. 220) is to reject an essential conviction of the reformer and the major motivation of his life. The author's own theological bias on that point distorts his perspective on Calvin's thought. In fact, one may wonder whether what Leith calls Calvin's key idea is not what Leith thinks should have been Calvin's key idea.

One will also wonder how Leith can support his assertion that "it was Calvin's deliberate intention to build his theology on a Lutheran foundation" (p. 222). The genesis of the *Institutes* as a pleading in opposition to the false accusations of Francis I against the French evangelicals and Leith's own thesis that the key to Calvin's theology is his concern with life rather than speculation militate against such a conclusion. Calvin's attitude is quite different from Luther's. He is not a soul wracked by a sense of guilt but an earnest seeker after truth. After all, he summarizes his conversion as becoming "teachable." Besides, by the time Calvin was writing,

Luther's ideas had become common stock among the partisans of the Reformation. Therefore, any idea of a systematic dependence upon Luther appears to be groundless.

These reservations do not lessen the value of *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. The book sets Calvin's theology in his practical approach to life. It is a clear and excellent guide to the thought of the great reformer. It is too bad it took so long for it to come into print.

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DANIEL AUGSBURGER

Liechty, Daniel. *Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists: An Early Reformation Episode in East Central Europe*. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, no. 29. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988. 167 pp. \$23.95.

Daniel Liechty is well equipped for producing a work on Sabbatarian Anabaptism. Trained first at Goshen College, Eastern Mennonite College, and Mennonite Biblical Seminary, he supplemented this basic education in arts and theology with travel and research in the "homelands" of Fischer and of the Anabaptist and other groups with which Fischer had contact in Central and Eastern Europe. Study at the University of Budapest in 1979, sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee, provided Liechty the opportunity for his inaugural work on the topic of the present publication, and the dissertation he presented to the Protestant faculty of the University of Vienna in 1983 constituted the preliminary form of what has become, after "at least three full revisions" (p. 15), the volume now in hand.

Gerhard F. Hasel pioneered the research on the Sabbatarian Anabaptists—i.e., those Anabaptists who advocated and adhered to Saturday rather than Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. In his Master's thesis (1960) and in two subsequent articles in *AUSS* (5 [1967]: 101-121 and 6 [1968]: 19-28), he detailed the Sabbatarian views and arguments of both Oswald Glaidt and Andreas Fischer. Hasel's excellent contribution helped to make evident the need for further investigation of this fascinating, but little-known, facet of Anabaptist history and practice. Liechty has competently met the challenge of this need, though he, like Hasel, has had to depend, not on Glaidt's and Fischer's own writings on the subject, which are no longer extant, but on rebuttals that were made by Valentine Crautwald and Caspar Schwenckfeld.

Fortunately, the two anti-Sabbatarian writers have evidently set forth quite fully and accurately their opponents' views. Their own counter-arguments, however, betray at times what appears to be a lower level of discernment as to precisely what Glaidt and Fischer really meant. This is a facet of the subject, unfortunately, that Liechty has largely skipped over.