

May 28, 2009

Dear Friends of the Foundation:

As we continue to read through Calvin's *Institutes* this year, I want to share with you again a recommendation I made last fall.

In the providence of God and in the wisdom of the author and the publisher, this new book has been issued at the most propitious time:

Partee, Charles. *The Theology of John Calvin*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. xix + 345 pp.

Partee writes in the Preface:

... This engagement is centered on the *thought* of John Calvin, which means the concern is not with his *life* (which was rather dull in comparison with Martin Luther) or his *influence* (which was tremendous in comparison with anybody). . . . Our purpose is twofold: (1) to survey the full sweep of Calvin's theology and (2) to collect the benefits that accrue. . . .

Several convictions lie behind this effort. First, convinced that Calvin's theology is important for Western intellectual history, I have tried to study him *carefully*. Second, convinced that Calvin has much to teach us, I have tried to read him *sympathetically*. Third, convinced that Calvin has been seriously misrepresented, I have tried to interpret him *correctly*. Fourth, convinced that Calvin deserves to be understood, I have tried to explain him *clearly*. . . .

... John Calvin provides us not only a profound exposition of the various topics of Christian faith but also a splendid outline for theological reflection. The range of questions Calvin raises and the answers he gives is both important and instructive. In short, the theology of John Calvin is not only a permanent, but also a present, resource for Christian understanding and faith. . . .

... Calvin is remembered in prestigious schools that claim to be endowed by him. The large institutions of orthodox Calvinism maintain Calvin's conservative legacy. The small Schleiermacher sodality represents liberal Calvinism, and the edifice of neo-orthodox Calvinism rests its head on Calvin as one of its main pillars. This writer has spent first-class time in all these schools but has earned only degrees of separation. . . .

... [P]roper engagement requires understanding the substance of each part, the outline of the whole, and some willingness to be instructed. (pp. xi, xii, xiii, xv, xvii)

On the cover, I. John Hesselink writes:

This monumental study is the fruit of a lifelong career of studying and teaching the theology of John Calvin. Partee has not only read Calvin with a keen and critical eye, but he

has also read almost everything written about Calvin as well as a variety of related literary and philosophical works. Partee boldly criticizes both friends and foes of Calvin who he feels have missed the mark, but this is above all a passionate personal testimony to the abiding significance of the Genevan Reformer.

Stacy Johnson writes:

A magisterial survey of Calvin's theology. Based on a lifetime of study, Charles Partee provides a compelling and balanced portrait of Calvin as a theologian of the heart whose driving concern was the believer's spiritual union with Christ. Engaging and brimful of wisdom, this is a must-read book that will be of interest to all who care about Calvin's continuing contribution to the life of the church today.

Tony Lane writes:

Calvin has suffered from many interpreters who have sought to recruit him for this or that contemporary school of thought, so it is refreshing to read this "no-school" interpretation. Calvin's thought is expounded topic by topic without seeking to force it into an overall system. Also, there is no attempt to claim that Calvin's theology is controlled by any "central dogma." This exposition stands in the tradition of François Wendel's well-known *Calvin*, to which it is a worthy successor. It will need to be taken seriously by all future interpreters of Calvin's theology.

To make explicit the purpose of this message, I commend this book to you. Read it along with the *Institutes*, and learn from it as from a wise companion.

Grace and Peace,

Jim

Dr. James C. Goodloe IV, *Executive Director*

Foundation for Reformed Theology

4103 Monument Avenue

Richmond, Virginia 23230

www.foundationrt.org

(804) 678-8352

"Better Preaching, Better Teaching, Better Pastoral Care"

The Foundation is exempt from Federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) and is not a private foundation as defined by Section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.