

der katholischen Kirche, sondern der ersten Zuneigung zur evangelischen Lehre; *W. Fred Graham* «Recent Studies in Calvin's Political, Economical and Social Thought and Impact» (361–366) und *David E. Demson* «The Image of Calvin in Recent Research» (367–383), der sich v.a. auf die Frage der Glaubenswahrheit und -erfahrung bei Calvin konzentriert.

Der ganze Band ist unerhört reichhaltig, behandelt wichtige Themen auf aktuellem Stand und zeugt von der großen Ausdehnung, die die Calvin-Forschung im englischen Sprachgebiet in den letzten 15 Jahren erfahren hat.

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Elders and the Plural Ministry

The Role of Exegetical History in Illuminating John Calvin's Theology, Genève, Libraire Droz, S.A., 1988 (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance CCXXIII), 222 p. + bibliographies + index.

Four years after her work on Calvin's theory of the diaconate, Dr. McKee has produced a sequel. Unfortunately, as is so often the case with sequels, this book does not meet the standards established by its predecessor. My review will consist of a description of the contents of McKee's study, a brief enumeration of the main critical flaws of the work, and a word about the presentation of the argument.

As she did in her earlier work, McKee here marshals a history of exegesis for a number of key texts for the theory of the plural ministry. Examples from the patristic through the reformation period from both the east and the west for the exegesis of Rom 12:8, I Cor 12:28, I Tim 5:17, and Eph 4:11 form the backbone of this book. With them McKee seeks to demonstrate to what extent Calvin drew on traditional sources for his own exegesis of these texts. McKee then attempts to establish a line of influence in the century following Calvin of "Calvinistic" theories of the plural ministry based on further elaborations of Calvin's exegesis. Along the way McKee stops to consider such related questions as permanent and temporary offices, the contemporary applicability of certain offices as given by Paul, and the way that various interpreters have linked New Testament texts to produce a coherent theory of the ministry that could be put into practice in the society of their day. McKee is at particular pains to point out the way that Calvin drew on traditional sources while still generating an innovative exegesis for a given text.

Three main problems call the argument of this study into question. First, it can hardly be taken for granted, especially in light of what we know about academic life in the late medieval world, that a single exegetical river flows from

the patristic period through the sixteenth century. What McKee understands as Calvin's silent rejection of an exegetical trajectory may merely indicate that the Genevan reformer was not acquainted with the writer in question. Particularly given the fact that Calvin's formal training was not in theology it seems rash to posit his acquaintance with such a broad number of exegetes. Related to this problem is the fact that because she assumes that Calvin is familiar with almost every author who wrote in Greek or Latin before 1500 and quite a few of his contemporaries, the argument from silence takes on a disproportional weight in proving her thesis. Second, although McKee has mined all of Calvin's works for his use of the texts on which she concentrates, the other exegetes do not receive the same treatment. According to her bibliography, McKee consulted only Thomas' *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura* and neither of his *Summae*, which also demonstrate how Thomas used Pauline texts to establish a theory of the ministry. Equally, McKee cites Bullinger only in his commentary on Paul (first published in 1537, not 1533, as McKee indicates on p. 50) although he wrote on these texts and on the ministry in general in a number of other works. The problem is that verse-by-verse commentaries often express superficial perspectives when compared to a fuller exposition in the context of a connected argument. Third, McKee seeks always to give Calvin the last word and to place him at the inception of a new era in Scriptural interpretation. Her arguments do not always prove conclusively that, in fact, Calvin has been particularly innovative in his use of a text. The constraints of McKee's method do not allow her to bring in evidence from the social or political sphere, where Calvin's theories did indeed result in unique practices.

This straining to document Calvin's uniqueness as an exegete has unfortunate results for the presentation of the argument. The sentences die the death of a thousand qualifications. On occasion McKee qualifies herself into incomprehensibility, as in the following: "Comments on the 'permanence' of particular ecclesiastical offices *almost but not absolutely certainly imply* permanence in the church as distinct from the society and are therefore *rather good* evidence of 'Calvinistic' interpretation of Rom 12:6–8 or I Cor 12:28" (italics mine, p. 203). This sentence which, when shorn of its qualifiers loses all plausibility, indicates an author who recognizes the sketchiness of her argument.

McKee could have written an excellent article with the material she has here assembled. As a book, however, one cannot recommend it.

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