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#### BOOK REVIEW

John R. Beeke, ed. *The Beauty and Glory of the Father*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013. 156 pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1601782465.

*The Beauty and Glory of the Father* addresses an area of concentration that for one reason or another has been, in some degree, lacking—namely the fatherhood of God. Within contemporary trends, the Trinity has found a substantial home within theological discourse; however, among those works dedicated to matters of the Trinity there are certainly fewer works that focus so intently on the nature of the Father as this book does. This book is a compilation of messages preached at the 2012 conference held at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. This gives the book something of a homiletical tone that fits comfortably within Reformed circles; moreover, it employs the King James Version of the Bible extensively.

The book is divided into five major sections, the first of which is a treatment of the Father via the Son—more accurately, beholding the glory of the Father via his only Son. The first chapter argues for the hermeneutical centrality of the notion “The Father loveth the Son” (more central than John 3:16, the author claims); for in this the Father’s nature is revealed. This is followed by a consideration of the exodus by Jerry Bilkes. Using Hos 11:1 as a mediating text between the exodus from Egypt and the new exodus demonstrated in the event of Christ, Bilkes explores the role of God the Father as it appears within these narratives.

The second major section gives attention to the attributes of the Father. Beginning with a chapter on Isaiah’s vision, Derek Thomas gives a detailed treatment of this ecstatic experience and what can be known of God through it. Then William Van-

Doodewaard unfolds the merciful nature of God the Father in Peter's first epistle to those suffering and disenfranchised. The chapter concludes with a message by Paul Smalley on Richard Sibbes' theology of the Father's mercy and faithfulness.

The third section takes up the Father's role as Savior. The first chapter, by Thomas, offers an account of Jesus' statement in John 14—that he is the way, truth, and life—in order to ground considerations of the Father's identity in that of his relationship to the Son. And in this way, the salvific role of the Son is true to the glory of the Father himself. The following chapter resources a range of Puritan voices to speak to God's act of adoption; in this message Beeke gives special attention to the Father's act of adoption—a theme that has seen limited attention in Puritan scholarship.

The fourth section, and the final major division of chapters, expounds the loving embrace of God the Father. In first looking to the Sermon on the Mount, VanDoodewaard demonstrates how this material orients the believer to life in, for, and with the Father, which is modeled by Christ himself. This is followed by a chapter on counseling in which David Murray unpacks the implications from the nature of the Father for the task of counseling itself. The section concludes with an exposition of Hebrews 12, insisting that what is also proper to the loving nature of God is his role as chastiser.

The concluding section by Ryan McGraw relates the doctrine of the Trinity to the life of personal devotion. Admitting that for many the doctrine of the Trinity is an unclear and, at times, irrelevant artifact of Christianity, McGraw argues that it is in fact the foundation and cornerstone of all Christian thought. In this way then, all theological reflection, personal attention, and communal exaltation must rightly regard the God who is distinctly Father, Son, and Spirit. Therefore, McGraw calls for an implementation of Trinitarian thinking and living that can enrich the life of faithfulness to the triune God himself.

As indicated at the beginning of this review, the narrowed theme of the fatherhood of God is an area that deserves more explicit attention. In this way, *The Glory and Beauty of the Father* is a welcome contribution. Moreover, as a work on

fatherhood, it nevertheless provides a thoroughly Trinitarian account of that fatherhood. It insists that the full scope of God's redemptive history and the event of Jesus' Incarnation always represents a dynamic of interpersonal activity grounded in the unified nature of God. This robust vision is applied readily to the life of the believer as that which is of infinite worth. In addition, this work incorporates a wide spectrum of biblical themes and material that culminates in quite an enriching encounter with the biblical witness. There is a practical biblical theology informing the contours of these chapters. Originally prepared as messages to be delivered, these chapters provide a personal dimension that connects the grand picture of God as Father with those who try to live each day in appreciation of this reality. Addressing the orphaned, abused, and the confused, this book has a pastoral address to the many individuals who might hear this message.

That being said, there remain a few limitations and shortcomings of the book itself. By its very nature as a compilation of preached messages, it does not offer much in the way of developing its arguments or having critical engagement with other resources. A few of the chapters offer a treatment of certain Puritan thinkers and thereby briefly engage in Puritan scholarship, but this feature is rather limited on the whole. This results in a tone throughout the work that seems to state its contentions matter-of-factly; this becomes increasingly obvious as one steps further away from the basic conviction of Evangelical Reformed/Puritan thinking. This tendency appears to carry over into overly simplistic and sweeping comments that are not duly warranted within the development of the argumentation: stating phrases such as, "inescapable conclusion" (p. 18); "the church has lost sight of the holiness of God" (p. 37); and "our postmodern world" (p. 72). There is also an element of internal conflict between the chapters themselves; for example, Bartel Elshout suggests that when "we listen to the divine dialogue in Genesis 1:26, we are listening to a conversation between the Father and the Son (in the Spirit); 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,'" but in Thomas' chapter he says, "When we read the Old Testament from the point of view of the New Testament, we can see what no Jew—not Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, or

Daniel—ever saw: the doctrine of the Trinity! We may read God’s words in the account of creation, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ (Gen 1:26), and see that the plural pronoun (‘us’) is perfectly harmonious with the fact that there is deliberation within the Trinity . . . But Moses did not draw any such conclusion. In fact, no Jew ever suggested that there exists plurality within *one* God” (p. 33). Moreover, sprinkled throughout the entire book is an unrelenting Evangelical Reformed vocabulary and conceptuality; one can hardly avoid concluding that this book becomes nearly unpalatable from any contrary position. The word forms and theological interjections are therefore formulaic and border on being clichés.

This book would therefore not be geared towards scholars or those looking to read on this topic in a reflective and critical manner. It is uniquely fitted for those who are seeking enrichment in sermonic form, particularly those of a Reformed persuasion. *The Beauty and Glory of the Father* nevertheless does provide a biblically rigorous treatment of a theme that has all the potential for further discussion, namely the fatherhood of God; and therefore it could be of great value for some in its inclusion of biblical motifs, its navigation of Trinitarian reasoning, and its existential (or personal) attention, all of which makes this a possible resource and inspiration to ministers in general and preachers in particular.

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