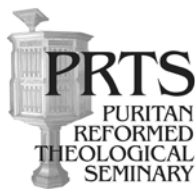


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Cover artwork by Caffy Whitney and design by Amy Zevenbergen: John Calvin (1509–1564)—the premier exegete and theologian of the Reformation, top right; William Perkins (1558–1602), “the father of English Puritanism,” bottom left.

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From the Editors



The recurrent cycle of the seasons forces human beings to think about the nature of time and its passage: its meaning and goal, its origins and the forces shaping it. Christians are especially people of a Book, a revelation, the Scriptures, which informs them of God's understanding of our history. In the first essay in this issue David Murray very ably outlines this divine understanding as seen from the vantage-point of the Old Testament. It is a timely piece, as recent events in world history and recent scientific reflections are forcing people to think again about the meaning of history. Now, one of the major strategies by which we deal with the passage of time is to remember: remember specific events that we celebrate year by year, or some that we celebrate more infrequently. Among the latter is one that many thought about this past year, namely, the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible in 1611. Gerald Bilkes helpfully guides us through the preface to that remarkable translation, showing us what it can teach us about Bible translation and our own interaction with the Scriptures. Then Joel Beeke gives us a rich tour through what he rightly calls "the greatest day in the history of the world: the final twenty-four hours of Jesus' life prior to His crucifixion and death" and helps us appreciate afresh the historicity—and theological significance—of a number of the details in John 18.

It is not often that this journal contains papers on the Anabaptist tradition, which, especially in its origins, has some things to teach those who delight in the Reformed faith. David Saxton's essay on Michael Sattler is welcome both for the light it throws on this particular Anabaptist's witness and also because it forces us to recognize God's work among those who do not identify themselves as specifically Reformed, but who nonetheless love the Lord Jesus. Yet another area in which contemporary Reformed believers are not as informed as they should be is the tremendous stream of French Reformed theology and history. Here, Mark Larson helps us appreciate the great French theologian Pierre du Moulin, who, in some ways, is the most important Francophone theologian in the first half of the seventeenth

century. Larson discusses du Moulin's thought on knowing God, a central topic in Christian thought. Two essays then look at two of du Moulin's younger contemporaries on the other side of the English Channel: a very needful treatment of John Owen's thought about the role of the Holy Spirit in the *pactum salutis* by Laurence O'Donnell and Brian Cosby's discussion of the Christology of John Flavel. It is good to see Flavel getting increased academic attention in recent days. We then have two excellent studies concerning the Synod of Dordt, which also merits greater attention by English-speaking scholarship: a more general examination of the historical context of the Synod by William VanDoodewaard and Daniel Hyde's illuminating study of the teaching on the Sabbath by the pronouncements of the Synod. Rounding out this group of papers dealing with historical subjects is Andrew McGinnis's ground-breaking study of the way American Presbyterians dealt with the expanding frontier of settlement during the late eighteenth century. The way in which Methodism with its circuit riders dealt with the frontier in this era is well known, and it is fascinating to see the way that Presbyterians dealt with the same phenomenon of wide-open space. This paper is a good reminder that Christian witness is not only shaped by time and historical events but also by space and geographical context.

This year will see a number of anniversaries, among them the tercentennial of the birth of the much-overlooked but remarkable Calvinistic hymnwriter Joseph Hart (1712–1768). Brian Najapfour helps us remember the man and his hymns. Then, in the section of this journal devoted to pastoral theology, we have a number of rich essays on the calling of the preacher and their preaching (Nam Joon Kim, and Joel Beeke and David Murray), on what is genuine ministry (Joel Beeke)—the discussion of weeping here sounds a rarely-heard note in contemporary pastoral reflection; on the missionary experience of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America during the tumultuous years of the mid-twentieth century (Gordon Keddie); and on the vital necessity of continuing education for ministers (Ryan McGraw). The regular sheaf of book reviews helps round out this issue.

Of course, we are biased when it comes to this journal, but increasingly we see it as a resource of experimental Calvinism that has few parallels on the North American scene. As such we wholeheartedly recommend it to not only your prayerful and mindful perusal, but also something you would recommend to others to pick up, read, and study.