

convinced that Bell interprets 2 Corinthians 4:16 in exactly the same way as Calvin did, because he (Calvin) wrote that God calls us back to meditate on a better life (*meditatio vitae melioris*), and by this Calvin could very well have referred to our life in the future world. This is exactly how he interpreted verse 18: we have to carry our thoughts forward to the eternal kingdom; there is nothing for us to rest upon but to have confidence in a future life.

After having distinguished between these two forms of redemption, namely redemption through the exorcisms of Jesus and redemption from satanic power through the death and resurrection of Christ, Bell makes an attempt to relate them to each other. Is there such a thing as a “truth of myth”? Bell answers in the affirmative. The next question is how the truth of myth can be discovered. Despite the differences in the New Testament pertaining to redemption from Satan’s power, Bell states that in all cases their truth can be discerned only through faith. For Paul, faith is related to the existential displacement the believer undergoes. For Hebrews and the synoptic gospels, faith is related to our embedding ourselves (or being embedded!) in the myth.

Towards the end of his book, Bell makes some interesting concluding comments. First, it can be said that the devil and his demons do exist. They have an ontological status which can be compared to that of Adam, but not to the existence of God. Second, the devil and his demons can be disembodied, as some texts in the New Testament seem to indicate (Eph 2:2; 6:12; 2 Cor 4:4). The disembodied spirit is a combination of some entity in the noumenal realm together with a subject on the boundary of the phenomenal world. Third, the devil and his demons have a personality of some kind. They are definitely not to be considered as mere invented mythical figures, for the world of the demonic is nothing else but the real world in which we live. In his “concluding pastoral postscript”, Bell highlights the extraordinary nature of our world. The world is truly mysterious and demonic activity is part of that mystery.

This is surely a thought-provoking book, even when it has not convinced this reviewer as far as some of the author’s exegetical decisions are concerned. Furthermore, the structure of the book is not as logical as it could have been (e.g. why is a philosophical framework constructed in ch 3-4, between the two main examples of redemption?) and the author does tend to occasionally repeat himself (e.g. the discussion of 2 Cor 4:16 on pp 223-226, repeated on pp 286-291). Nevertheless, Bell’s contribution deserves serious consideration, in particular his concluding comments on the reality of evil and the power of Satan in our present world. Is it not time to abandon the rather closed worldview that we have inherited from the age of Enlightenment?



Brownson, J V 2007 – *The promise of baptism: An introduction to baptism in Scripture and the Reformed tradition*

Publisher: Eerdmans. Pages 223. Price \$16.00.

Reviewer: Rev N J S Steenekamp (Middelburg)

In this well researched book, Prof Brownson clearly outlines the meaning of baptism from a Reformed perspective. He uses the questions and opinions about baptism from the church and the community at large to form the framework within which he discusses this sacrament.

Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

Brownson argues that baptism should be seen as a Christian practice that declares God's promises to man. This perspective is used to answer all the questions about faith and people's perspectives on baptism in our times. Issues discussed include rebaptism, infant baptism, the meaning baptism has for people who no longer believe; the place where baptism should take place et cetera. All discussions are pastorally orientated.

The book consists of thirty short chapters (seldom more than eight pages apiece) which each masterly answers one specific question on the meaning or practice of baptism. References to historical works and Biblical passages abound and are well integrated into the discussion. The book can be read from beginning to end, but also offers the possibility of being used as a reference work, reading the chapters in a random fashion in order to answer specific questions.

Every chapter is concluded with a summary of three to six bulleted phrases. This serves as a very useful search facility of the contents of the chapter or as a study-aid for students. In addition, a few questions and statements *for further reflection and discussion* are included, as well as a very short reference for further study on the contents of the specific chapter. The thirty chapters are grouped in six sections namely:

- Basic questions;
- The core meanings of baptism;
- Baptism, faith and salvation;
- The case for infant baptism;
- Disputes and questions surrounding infant baptism;
- Pastoral decisions surrounding baptism.

An index of Scripture references and a select annotated bibliography on baptism are included. Apart from the book's value for the scholar or student, it would be very useful for any church member in deepening their understanding of baptism.



Brueggemann, W 2006 – *The word that redescribes the world: The Bible and discipleship*

Publisher: Fortress. Pages 235. Price: Unknown.

Reviewer: Rev André Ungerer (Klerksdorp)

The title of the book already indicates that Brueggemann – as always – begins with the text of the Scripture. Throughout the book both the danger and the power of Scripture are emphasized and a mode of looking that is confrontational, especially between text and the world we live in, is encountered. Brueggemann, as an Old Testament scholar, uses a rich variety of texts, also from the New Testament, to confront the world we live in. The text of the world is described in various ways throughout the book: It is the text of the Enlightenment, of modernism, autonomous freedom, technical solutions to every problem, sexual emancipation, systematic violence, to name but a few. The book is about the redescription (by means of the Word) that protests against the initial description and presentation of reality (the World) which is not an adequate or trustworthy account.

The subtitle *The Bible and discipleship* does not imply a ten point plan as a *modus operandi* on how to encourage discipleship in a congregation, for in Brueggemann's own