

Oliver D. Crisp

Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), xi + 260 pp., \$34.00, ISBN 9781451486131.

The title of this work accurately reflects the content of the volume. Crisp intends to broaden Reformed theology by exploring a range of topics of which many presume that they are crossing the borderline of what is properly called 'Reformed.' Crisp's purpose is to show that the Reformed tradition is broader than is often presumed and in most cases, he pleads for a view as his own that goes slightly beyond what is a commonly accepted reading of the tradition. Methodologically, he does so from what has become known as 'analytic theology' and also 'theology of retrieval'.

In the first chapter, Crisp addresses the questions of Scripture and tradition, faith and experience and experience and doctrine. Here, he argues for a broadening of the Reformed tradition in terms of showing that religious experience has always played its role next to Scripture alone, not only in the tradition, but also in Scripture itself. Drawing on this, he argues for broadening the Reformed tradition in the sense of accepting that a broad array of varieties of Evangelical Christianity deserve to be counted as members of the Reformed tradition, including the Wesleyan and the Arminian traditions. In the second chapter, Crisp defends the notion of eternal justification against its critics, trying to show that 'there is more to be said for eternal justification than is often thought' (68). He distinguishes between a more drastic account that he labels as 'justification in eternity' and a more subtle form that is more broadly represented in the Reformed tradition, 'justification from eternity'.

In the third chapter, Crisp comes closer to questions of predestination, free will, and universalism, questions that play a key role in the remainder of the book. He defends that Calvinism is compatible with a form of libertarianism, more precisely, that Calvinism does not imply hard determinism. The latter is often assumed, but Crisp points to the fact that confessional documents can consistently be interpreted without accepting hard determinism. The fact that God foreknows and directs the future does not necessarily imply that the world is of such a character that every effect is physically determined by its cause. Voices in the tradition, from Augustine up to the Reformed scholastics, are well aware of this insight (although Crisp draws only on the latter).

In the fourth chapter, Crisp takes a further step towards counterintuitive forms of Reformed theology by arguing that Augustinianism, which is traditionally seen as particularism, is compatible with universalism. There is nothing concerning the depth of the fall, the necessity of grace and the irresistible nature of that grace, that precludes the Augustinian from believing that God

will give it to every human being. Here, the analytic-theological character of the work is clearly evident, because Crisp seems to give an account of the Augustinian tradition in which the appeal to Scripture for warranting particularism is of only secondary importance, something which is hardly common in the Reformed tradition. Chapter five elaborates on this by rejecting and providing an argument for Augustinian particularism, namely the idea that God cannot be obliged to create a world in which everyone is saved. Chapter six is something of an interlude. It deals with Barthian universalism and concludes that Barth's theology shows remarkable tensions that might be solved through a creative reinterpretation of his theology.

In chapters seven and eight, Crisp argues for hypothetical universalism, more particularly English hypothetical universalism as developed by John Davenant and others. Crisp protects it against charges of being a variety of Arminianism, and defends it as a viable alternative to more particularistic accounts of atonement in the Reformed tradition. Crucial to him is that hypothetical universalism does not imply a reshuffling of order of the divine decrees. 'The elect, in this way of thinking, are those God provides with the gift of faith so that they can respond appropriately to Christ's saving work. Those for whom Christ died in principle but who are not given the gift of faith are not reconciled to God.' (189) In Crisp's view, it avoids the cost of definite atonement, and it provides a better balance to the variety of Biblical witness on atonement in either a universalist or a particularist direction. In spite of a whole chapter on the double payment objection, I missed an answer to, in my view, a much more serious objection concerning the coherence of God's Trinitarian work of salvation. Why would the second Person of the Trinity die for the sins of the whole world if the third Person is going to give the benefits of this only to the elect? And once more, if the Spirit takes these benefits from Christ, why would Christ not give those benefits to all for whom he died?

I have learned much from reading this book and I can recommend it to scholars and students interested in the doctrinal retrieval of the Reformed tradition. Sometimes, the analytic-theological approach gets in the way rather than helping the reader. For example, I do not see why certain arguments need to receive an overly technical exposition before being rebutted. Also, the book seems to be written slightly too hastily. The overall integration of the book suffers from this, and sometimes also the argument within a chapter does not lead to a clear and fully elaborated conclusion.

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