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The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza, by Julia A. Lamm

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yond the images and the rhetorical play that move across the surface of the text." This has led to the assumption (mistaken, according to J.) that "the text's rhetorical play can be interpretively bypassed in the theologian's search for the true meaning of the *Institutes*" (112).

J. challenges such assumptions, claiming instead that "one of the text's principal functions is to move the reader through a series of rhetorical strategies designed to convert and redispose him or her." When the text is "read in this manner, one comes to see that it is precisely through the play of these images that the text's functional meaning is constituted." For it is "through the reader's engagement with these rhetorical mechanisms," that "the truth of the text—the reorientation of the reader toward God—is enacted" (112). J.'s final chapter, "Calvin and the Rhetorics of Contemporary Theology," discusses this understanding of Calvin in relation to postliberal, pragmatic, and other contemporary theological views.

Traditional approaches to Calvin must now engage J.'s work. Her portrayal of Calvin as rhetorician and crafter of rhetorical strategies raises issues about Calvin's views of truth—and here dialogue must go on. Also, how did Calvin see himself as an interpreter of Holy Scripture who stood within an historical exegetical tradition? J. does not address this, but it has been a dimension highlighted by other Calvin scholars as a basic perception. What effect would this insight have on how Calvin functioned rhetorically? J.'s fresh approach will certainly stimulate Calvin studies and provide needed dialogue points for further discussions.

Memphis Theological Seminary DONALD K. MCKIM

THE LIVING GOD: SCHLEIERMACHER'S THEOLOGICAL APPROPRIATION OF SPINOZA. By Julia A. Lamm. University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1996. Pp. x + 246. $40.

Lamm explores an important issue in Schleiermacher interpretation: the influence of the philosopher Spinoza's pantheistic metaphysics on S.'s theology. This topic is not just a mopping-up exercise in a well-worked field, explaining yet another nuanced influence on a great mind. S.'s career-long grapplings with Spinoza—in the unpublished writings of his youth, in his first book, *Speeches on Religion*, and in his mature dogmatic theology, *The Christian Faith*—represent the first efforts of a post-Enlightenment theologian to construct an understanding, and later a doctrine, of God's radical presence to the world, a conceptualization of divine immanence free of the anthropomorphic and personalistic traits that had come under the attack of rationalistic critics. Lamm offers a case study in the theological revisionism with which S.'s method has come to be identified. That S. was accused of pantheism by both his contemporaries and later generations of theologians is an indictment of his efforts to mediate tradi-

tional Christian truth to modern sensibilities. Lamm enters the fray of this nearly-200-year-old dispute to defend at least the mature theologian against the charge of pantheism.

Lamm is not immodest in her claim to have written the first monograph in English on this topic (4), a somewhat surprising fact in light of its significance. I found the historical and interpretive narrative she constructed to be insightful, controlled, and judiciously executed. She never loses sight of the different levels of nuance that her study requires. She knows very well that the assessment of Spinoza's influence on S. depends entirely on how S. read and continued to read, and how he used and continued to use Spinoza throughout the various stages of his career. In this last respect, her book is particularly accomplished. She argues effectively that the young S., already a careful but not uncritical student of Kant when he entered the "pantheism controversy" in 1793, read Spinoza through Kantian eyes. S. thus tempered Spinoza's metaphysical claims about the one, divine, and lifeless substance, emphasizing instead the dynamism implicit in the experiential encounter with a God now conceived as vitally involved in the ordinary workings of the world. This "organic monism" enabled S. to speak of the divine as an infinite reality comprehending the finite, while yet retaining the reality of individual existents themselves, now viewed as manifestations, even living manifestations, of the divine. Lamm develops and justifies a typology of several traits (organic monism, ethical determinism, higher realism, and a nonanthropomorphic view of God) to characterize S.'s particular commitment to Spinozism.

After considering S.'s increasingly mitigated use of Spinoza's thought in the editions of *Speeches*, Lamm turns to Spinoza's influence on S.'s dogmatics, *The Christian Faith*. The first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, in which S. doctrinally expounds the God-world relationship, provides the most obvious test case for Spinoza's influence, and Lamm shows how S.'s treatment of the doctrines of creation and preservation, and the divine attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omniprescence, negotiate Spinoza's powerful vision of divine immanence and the Christian tradition's commitment to a living God. In her concluding chapter she extends her inquiry to the second part of the *Glaubenslehre* which expounds the doctrine of redemption. It is in this dimension of S.'s theology, she argues, that one appreciates fully both Spinoza's influence and how S. appropriated Spinoza in a way that could be reconciled with a Christian understanding of God's relationship to the world. Lamm believes that S.'s God was living but not necessarily personalistic, not pantheistic though utterly enmeshed in the workings of the world and in the hope of human fulfillment.

While I began my reading already convinced of Lamm's thesis that the later S. could not legitimately be charged with pantheism, I completed it immensely more informed and secure in my judgment. This

is an excellent study and one that will be well received by scholars in the field.

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THE UNEASY CENTER: REFORMED CHRISTIANITY IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA. By Paul K. Conkin. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995. Pp. xvii + 310. $39.95; $16.95.

Conkin has undertaken to tell the story of Reformed Christianity in America "in its glory years," from its Puritan plantings to the Civil War. During these two centuries, when this congeries of Protestants made up the largest and most influential segment of Christianity in America (claiming 90% of all Americans in 1776, and 60% in 1865), "Reformed" almost defined the cultural meaning of "Christian," and perhaps even the meaning of "religion" itself. These Christians, "to use a spatial image, occupied the center. To use a topological image, they were the mainstream" (xi).

Two over-lapping theological categories, "Calvinist" and "evangelical," help to provide clarifying focus. C. convincingly argues that Calvinism cannot be taken as synonomous with Reformed Christianity. While Calvinism, at least as that confessionally precise and scholastically well-defined response to Arminianism defined in the 17th century, remains a key subject in his book, it does not define or exhaust C.'s focus. As he deftly shows, a growing share of American Reformed Christians in the 19th century simply did not consider themselves, and were not in fact, "Calvinists." Likewise, while all Christians claiming descent from the reforms of Zwingli and Calvin (Low Church Episcopalians no less than Separate Baptists) proudly claimed as their own the title "evangelical," at least as that term identified an emphasis on the preached Word and the efficacious working of the Spirit in personal piety and worship, most Reformed Christians in America were not evangelical in the revivalistic, emotional sense popularized by 19th-century Methodists. Thus, while "Calvinist" and "evangelical" do overlap in C.'s category of "Reformed Christianity," they do not do so neatly or definitively.

What groups fall into that "Reformed" category that C. identifies as the uneasy center of antebellum American religion? In C.'s spatial terms, if Roman Catholicism and the Lutheran tradition occupy a position on the "right," while anabaptist, antinomian, and adventist groups define the "left," then a broad spectrum of groups claiming the Reformed label–Episcopalians, Methodists, Congregationalist, Presbyterians, Baptists, German and Dutch Reformed, Disciples of Christ—occupy the culturally hegemonic but theologically contentious "center." While these groups could and did fight each other over questions of theology, polity, and worship, they all nonetheless claimed the Reformed tradition for their patrimony, closing ranks against "others" to offer tearful renditions of "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."