

needs to be acknowledged and come to terms with. But there is also mention of how some leaders in the Roman Catholic education system advocated the dis-establishment of Catholicism in Quebec in the 1970s, in recognition of growing ethnic and religious diversity (184). Other authors have noted how some Protestant church leaders were doing the same in relation to Protestantism in English-speaking Canada.

This is a very informative, well produced, and accessible book. It could be profitably read by lay people, clergy or academics who seek to be better informed about religious diversity in Canada.

– Don Schweitzer

**FEMINIST AND
WOMANIST ESSAYS
IN REFORMED
DOGMATICS**
**Columbia Series in
Reformed Theology**
**Editors: Amy Platinga
Pauw and Serene Jones**
**Louisville: Westminster/
John Knox, 2006, \$32.99**

This book is part of a series aimed at bringing classical Reformed dogmatics into conversation with the contemporary church. This particular volume

draws upon Reformed doctrines and reads these in light of feminist and Womanist convictions. While many think that mixing Reformed dogmatics and feminist theology is akin to joining oil and water, the editors of this volume would beg to differ. Serene Jones and Amy Platinga Pauw have assembled a wealth of authors, all of whom are theologians within Reformed churches within the United States, except one author, Margit Ernst-Habib, who writes from within the Protestant Reformed Church in Germany. These essays represent, in my view, a certain maturing of feminist theology, displaying not merely the posture of “suspicion” toward previous theologies, but also a considered appreciation of the gift of tradition, viewing it with the kind of nuance and rigour that was often missing in previous revisionist strategies.

The editors set the tone for the anthology with a definition of feminist and Womanist theologies as those which, “take special interest in the lives of women, their stories, their social roles and relations, and their flourishing and failures, and their multilayered experiences of oppression.” So far there is little to distinguish this proposal’s vision from that of earlier descriptions of the task of feminist theology. But the editors continue to add a rather surprising

complement: “These theologies bring women’s lives and experiences into the drama of the Christian message and explore *how Christian faith grounds and shapes women’s experiences of hope, justice, and grace*, as well as instigates and enforces... oppression, sin and evil.” [italics mine]. That the Christian tradition might have a normative role in the determination of hope, justice and grace is, in my view, a departure from feminist theology in a predominately suspicious mode. These editors seek to investigate the world-shaping significance of the Reformed tradition insofar as it constitutes the “drama” in which women are already participants. That the drama is named in the singular is telling, for Jones and Pauw see their own stories as part of God’s drama, a drama that also has such characters as John Calvin, who has contributed much to their story.

In each essay we see a re-working of the dominant feminist narrative about the role of scripture and tradition in women’s lives. While for most of the authors, there is a sense of ambiguity in relation to their tradition, there remains nevertheless an overwhelming tone of gratitude. For example, Womanist theologian Joan M. Martin reminds her readers of Calvin’s notion of work and calling

as those “positive goods subordinated to the well-being of the commonwealth in obedience to the light of God’s grace.” To Martin, Calvin’s theology offers a helpful account of the good of human industry that refuses to reify the social structures in which work is carried out. According to Martin, these insights from Calvin’s Reformation were promptly forgotten in the new commonwealths that were developed in Protestant America. Within the ante-bellum South, the virtues commonly identified with a “work ethic” were divorced entirely from the communal identity that made such an ethic possible. Work therefore had no background of “mutual service”, but was, rather, hierarchically ordered so that its benefits could only be enjoyed by the master. According to Martin, Calvin offers an account of labour that is strikingly at odds with the continued perception of the value of black women’s work.

Another fine essay is that of Kristine Kulp: “Always Reforming; Always Resisting!”, which begins with the story of Marie Durand, an 18th century Huguenot, imprisoned for 38 years for her faith in the Tour de Constance. Durand carved one word into her prison cell: “Résister!”—“Resist!” Durand’s words are no mere manifesto — they are the words of one for whom

vindication could never be an immediate horizon, at least not as a political goal. What we find in her is a resistance of another kind: confident in God's grace, resistance was not a call to arms, but to trust. It is this kind of trust that is most compelling in this anthology. Imprisoned by our own idolatries, resistance can too easily become its own parody: rebellion. Not so for these authors, for whom the full flourishing of women is already anticipated in the calling that they have received as Christians. If it means that they have enlisted an ally as unlikely as John Calvin to remind them of such a calling, then so be it.

– Jane Barter Moulaison

**RELIGION, FAMILY,
AND COMMUNITY IN
VICTORIAN CANADA:
The Colbys of Carrollcroft
by Marguerite Van Die
Montreal and Kingston:
McGill Queen's University
Press, 2006. xx, 282 pp.
\$75.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.**

If you glanced at the subtitle as you began to read this review, perhaps you paused to wonder why someone who is not related to the Colbys of Carrollcroft would be interested in their family history.

Marguerite Van Die quickly draws the reader into the story she tells by forthrightly answering this very question. In an introduction that nicely frames the study, she explains that this is not so much a history of the Colby family; it is more aptly thought of as a case study of the connections between religion and everyday life in Victorian Canada. She aptly compares her approach to examining the lines and colour of a small detail on a larger canvas. The broader picture of religion and society in Victorian Canada is not lost by this attention to minutia; indeed, in a remarkable way one gains a greater appreciation of it by following the lives of the Colby family from one generation to the next.

This is not the book that Van Die expected to write. When she set out to explore religion and the Victorian family, her initial plan was to include an account of the Colbys among others. Her design for the study changed when she was introduced to one of their descendents who had opened the family home and its papers to the public. The family archives proved to be a treasure trove of letters, diaries, photographs and other memorabilia that Van Die links gracefully to studies of religion, family, and North American culture in an impressive display of scholarship. At the centre of the