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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



We live in challenging days, buffeted theologically from without and from within. Issues we long thought were settled within the Reformed and evangelical worlds have suddenly re-emerged as matters of doubt and debate. Consider the issue of the historicity of Genesis 1–3, for example. In recent years, notable Reformed scholars have come out and denied the historical facticity of key aspects of these vital chapters. Micah Everett’s study of this issue, appropriately the opening article in this issue, is a vital read to help orient ourselves in this new debate. Our second biblical study, from the pen of Pieter de Vries, is the first installment of an examination of the glory of the cross, God’s final answer to the problem unleashed on the world in Genesis 3. It is important to remember that the Man dying on the cross, Jesus of Nazareth, is also the divine Lord of glory—hence the efficacy of the cross. Joel Beeke presents us with an excellent overview of the majesty of this Lord of glory. Bartel Elshout’s article, while meant to provide scriptural support from John’s Gospel for his study of the relationship between God the Father and the Son that appeared in the issue prior to this one, is well placed, providing support for the arguments of Beeke about the divinity of Christ. A final paper in this section by Adam McClendon is a study of the Puritan exegesis of a much-loved text from Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

A number of further papers on Puritan authors are also included in the next section on systematic and historical theology. The opening studies are of John Owen’s Trinitarianism—the most sublime of all topics in Christian theology (by Paul Smalley), and the life and ministry of John Flavel (by Brian Cosby). Then follows a study of the views of Richard Baxter regarding justification (by Michael Brown), which is most helpful, since antinomianism, to which Baxter was reacting, is ever-present where Calvinism is strong, and also since justification is also being heavily debated today with the emergence of the so-called New Perspective. This section concludes with the life of the little-known American Puritan George Philips (by Timothy Wood), much

admired by the later Puritan leader, Cotton Mather; and the ministry and thought of William Bagshawe, one of the last of the Puritan leaders active in Derbyshire (by Crawford Gribben). These studies carry on a tradition now well established through earlier fascicles of this journal, namely, of providing fresh and detailed studies of those remarkable men and women of God, the Puritans.

Puritanism also figures in the section dealing with experiential theology. Matthew Westerholm guides us through a study of Puritan views of the Lord's Table as a means of Christian assurance, while Matthew Barrett looks at the piety of the Canons of Dort (this breaks completely fresh ground with regard to English studies of this landmark document). Two studies comprise the section on pastoral theology and missions in this issue: a practical way to evaluate one's preaching, by Joel Beeke, and Lydia Kim-van Daalen's study of the spirituality of the Dutch Reformed theologian Wilhelmus à Brakel, a fine contribution to a growing body of literature on an extremely important theologian.

In the final section of articles, dealing with contemporary and cultural issues, we have a helpful overview by Joel Beeke of the way the Reformation ought to impact the laity as we approach the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its inception—a good reminder of what always needs to be the heart-longing of the minister of God; a discussion of the Sabbath in the teaching and ministry of Jesus and the Westminster Confession (by Ryan McGraw); an exploration of the way preaching must needs be serious in a world that wants comedy and not the glorious epic of tragedy and joy unspeakable that is in the Bible (by David Murray); and a treatment of the theologian Cornelius van Til's and the historian Gregg Singer's theological reflection on history (by William van Doodewaard—needless to say, we look for more fine studies like this one!).

And make sure not to miss the very last section, the book reviews. These are extremely helpful in knowing what has been published and what the contemporary world of Reformed and evangelical scholarship is saying on the important issues of our day. May these bite-sized reviews and the meatier articles of this issue help us all to be like the men of Issachar, who knew how to live in response to their times (1 Chron. 12:32).