

# REFORMED THEOLOGY

## *Identity and Ecumenicity II*

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION  
IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

*Edited by*

Wallace M. Alston Jr.

&

Michael Welker

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN / CAMBRIDGE, U.K.

UNIVERSITÄTS-  
BIBLIOTHEK  
HEIDELBERG

2007 A 1677

© 2007 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.  
All rights reserved

Published 2007 by  
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.  
2140 Oak Industrial Drive N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505 /  
P.O. Box 163, Cambridge CB3 9PU U.K.

Printed in the United States of America

12 11 10 09 08 07      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Reformed theology: identity and ecumenicity II:  
biblical interpretation in the Reformed tradition /  
edited by Wallace M. Alston, Jr. & Michael Welker.  
p.      cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8028-0386-3 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Bible — Criticism, interpretation, etc. — Congresses.
2. Reformed Church — Doctrines — Congresses.
- I. Alston, Wallace M., 1934    II. Welker, Michael, 1947-

BS511.3.R46 2007  
220.6088'2842 — dc22

2007004259

www.eerdmans.com

## Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	ix
1. Tamar's Cry: Re-Reading an Ancient Text in the Midst of an HIV/AIDS Pandemic <i>Denise M. Ackermann</i>	1
2. Individual Texts and Overall Pictures <i>Peter Balla</i>	34
3. Reading Contextually as Reading Reformed <i>Brian K. Blount</i>	43
4. Old Testament Studies from African Perspectives: A Research Survey and Some Suggestions about Future Trends <i>Hendrik Bosman</i>	58
5. Rejoice in Hope: The Bible and the Current Crisis of Despair <i>H. Russel Botman</i>	66
6. Calvin and Qoheleth Meet after a Hard Day's Night; or, Does Ecclesiastes Have a "Protestant" Work Ethic? <i>William P. Brown</i>	74

CONTENTS

7. The Contribution of Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation to the Reformed Interpretation of Scripture <i>H. J. Bernard Combrink</i>	91
8. To Glorify God and Enjoy God Forever: A Place for Joy in Reformed Readings of Scripture <i>Beverly Roberts Gaventa</i>	107
9. The Reflection of the Reformed Confessional Character in the Method Applied in Twentieth-Century Transylvanian Hungarian Exegetical Work <i>Zsolt Gereb</i>	116
10. Babel: Babble or Blueprint? Calvin, Cultural Diversity, and the Interpretation of Genesis 11:1-9 <i>Theodore Hiebert</i>	127
11. Ezekiel through the Spectacles of Faith <i>Jacqueline E. Lapsley</i>	146
12. History, Historiography, and Reformed Hermeneutics at Stellenbosch: Dealing with a Hermeneutical Deficit and Its Consequences <i>Bernard Lategan</i>	157
13. Now I Know: An Exposition of Genesis 22:1-19 and Matthew 26:36-56 <i>James Luther Mays</i>	172
14. The Book of Psalms: A Reformed Exegetical Perspective <i>J. Clinton McCann Jr.</i>	190
15. The Spirit and the Letter <i>Alexander J. McKelway</i>	198
16. Old Testament Exegesis in the Reformed Perspective: The Case of the Commandments <i>Patrick D. Miller</i>	217

Contents

17. Surprised by New Contexts? Challenges of Reformed Exegesis from within Liminal Spaces <i>Elna Mouton</i>	230
18. Reformed Confessions as Hermeneutical Problem: A Case Study of the Belhar Confession <i>Piet J. Naudé</i>	242
19. The Role of History and the Theology of the Old Testament <i>Ed Noort</i>	261
20. Relevance of the Reformed Faith to Ghana <i>E. A. Obeng</i>	278
21. Helping Us Know What to Look For: How the Service for the Lord's Day of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Influences the Interpretation of Scripture <i>Douglas F. Ottati</i>	287
22. Brokering Access to God: Reformed Perspectives and Contemporary Study of the Historical Jesus <i>Ronald A. Piper</i>	304
23. Redeeming Words: Hypostatic Union and the Reading of Scripture <i>Cynthia L. Rigby</i>	331
24. The Johannine Logos: Interpreting Jesus in a Multi-Religious Context <i>D. R. Sadananda</i>	349
25. Creation, Fall, and Sin: The Question of Denominationally Specific Interpretations as Shown in the Reception of the Paradise Narrative <i>Konrad Schmid</i>	373
26. Rhetoric and Ethic? A Reformed Perspective on the Politics of Reading the Bible <i>Dirk Smit</i>	385

CONTENTS

27. Peacemaking and Humanitarian Intervention:  
The Contribution of the Reformed Tradition  
to the Morality of Conflict after the Cold War 419  
*Iain Torrance*
28. *Sachkritik* as a Fundamental Device for Theological  
Interpretation 430  
*Hans Weder*
29. Hermeneutical Discussions Today and the Relevance of Calvin 441  
*Carver T. Yu*

*Introduction*

The Center of Theological Inquiry sponsored a second international conference of Reformed scholars in Stellenbosch, South Africa on March 30–April 3, 2001. The conference brought together some thirty exegetes and systematic theologians, from eleven countries to focus on the role of the Reformed confessional tradition in the reading and interpretation of Scripture.

One of the most important aspects of the discussion, emphasized by many contributions, was the intrinsic contextuality of theological work in general and of exegetical work in particular. Contextuality in this sense might mean a particular ethical concern or a specific historical, political, or cultural setting and challenge for theological, exegetical, and ecclesial existence. The contributions of Denise Ackermann, Hendrik Bosman, Russel Botman, Zsolt Gereb, Piet Naudé, E. A. Obeng, Rathakara Sadananda, Dirk Smit, and Iain Torrance specifically reflected such contextuality, albeit in different ways.

Equally important were the more general reflections on the issues of contextuality, which, as many papers emphasized, always means “poly-contextuality.” We live, work, and worship in a multitude of contexts (Brian Blount, Bernard Combrink). Historical and exegetical studies confront us continuously with poly-contextual conditions, which require a new and refined understanding of history (Ed Noort, Bernard Lategan), of reality (Hans Weder), of interreligious dialogue (Rathakara Sadananda), and of the various canonical biblical traditions (Beverly Gaventa, Jacqueline Lapsley, Elna Mouton, Peter Balla, Ron Piper). Poly-contextuality can lead to diffusion and relativism, to fruitless attempts at integration, or even to oppressive countermoves, if not adequately addressed. The conference discussion attempted to substanti-