

BOOK REVIEWS

***T&T Clark Handbook of Neo-Calvinism*, edited by Nathaniel Gray Sutanto and Cory Brock**

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Nathaniel Gray Sutanto and Cory Brock, eds. 2024. *T&T Clark Handbook of Neo-Calvinism*. London: T&T Clark.

In their editorial introduction, Nathaniel Gray Sutanto and Cory Brock state their goal in editing the *T&T Clark Handbook of Neo-Calvinism*: “Our hope is that this book will aid in the development of the neo-Calvinist movement for the future, not merely for the sake of an accurate historical consciousness but that it might contribute to its growth as a living tradition that would shape theological and cultural reflection worldwide” (5). This massive handbook is divided into forty chapters in four parts, each of which might have served as a fine handbook on its own: Theological Loci, Key Figures, Neo-Calvinism in Historical Perspective, and Neo-Calvinism and Its Legacy. The book concludes, moreover, with an extensive primary source bibliography by Dmytro Bintsarovskiy. Sutanto and Brock also add an important caveat worth considering: “There are, of course, potential focused chapters that did not find their way into this handbook on neo-Calvinism. . . . All projects must determine their limits and there are helpful treatments of each of these subjects found elsewhere. Nevertheless, all these traditions, ideas, and persons . . . and many more, are present or presupposed in the discussions and details of many of the chapters in this handbook” (4). This has been my dilemma in reviewing this book: While I would not complain about more than five hundred pages of new scholarship on neo-Calvinism, there are a few “focused chapters” I wish they had included. Whom, after all, is this handbook for? And what were the “limits” by which some chapter topics were chosen over others? The editors mostly leave their readers to infer the answers to these questions, so that is what I will attempt to do here.

Calvinists—whether neo- or otherwise—will not be surprised that my first impulse was to turn to the table of contents and look for the topics with which *I*, in my research on Abraham Kuyper, am most familiar. To my self-interested dismay, I found no chapters on German idealism, economics, Lutheranism, or Christian socialism. Abraham C. Flipse contributed a chapter on science, even noting that “Kuyper used the Dutch word ‘*wetenschap*’ (cf. German: *Wissenschaft*) for both the natural sciences and the humanities and . . . he viewed philosophical—‘big’—questions as an

integral part of science.” Yet he continues, “In this chapter I confine myself to the natural sciences” (476). Thus, there is actually no chapter on neo-Calvinism and science in the sense in which the key figures featured in part 2 of the handbook would have understood that term. There is a chapter on Continental philosophy by Christopher Watkin, but rather than treating early post-Kantian philosophers like Johann Gottlieb Fichte, F. W. J. Schelling, Friedrich Schleiermacher, or G. W. F. Hegel (all of whom the neo-Calvinist tradition has engaged from its beginnings), Watkin instead focuses on Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault. Happily, I did find chapters on revelation (Sutanto), theological ethics (Jessica Joustra), Abraham Kuyper (James D. Bratt), neo-Calvinism and the Netherlands (George Harinck), public theology (Matthew J. Kaemingk), political theology (David T. Koyzis), and the arts (Robert Covolo).

So by that totally depraved and self-centered scorecard, the handbook would not score well. But that hardly seems the right measure to me. Indeed, given how many chapters cover ground with which I’m less acquainted, perhaps *I’m* the target audience! In terms of my own research, it certainly “will aid in the development of the neo-Calvinist movement for the future” (5).

Still, divining the limits of what was and was not included in this volume remains a mystery. Perhaps there is no chapter on neo-Calvinism and Lutheranism because of the recent publication of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism in Dialogue* (Pickwick, 2023), edited by George Harinck and Brant M. Himes. But Sutanto and Brock just as recently coauthored *Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction* (Lexham, 2023), and they still dedicated the entirety of part 1 of their handbook to theological loci. Or perhaps they did not realize that Debra B. Haarsma’s chapter on Kuyper’s Stone Lecture on science in *Calvinism for a Secular Age* (IVP Academic, 2022) *also* focuses exclusively on natural science. At the least, a bibliography of secondary sources, even if only monograph-length works, could have improved this handbook by pointing readers in the direction of other books that might cover the topics beyond the limits—or limitations—of this handbook, whatever they may be.

But as for what this handbook *does* cover, the content has an encyclopedic quality, as perhaps it should. The extent to which chapters engage secondary scholarship varies. They generally do not begin by surveying the relevant literature on their topic, nor do they need to, since they all are meant to provide useful summaries rather than advancing their fields. But that is another reason an additional bibliography focused on secondary sources would have improved the handbook.

Even so, perhaps the brightest chapter was something of an original contribution: the final chapter by Timothy Keller on pastoral ministry. What a treasure to have this chapter after the author’s recent passing. A chapter by him on that topic in general would be valuable, but his engagement with neo-

Calvinism provides a testimony to the practical payoff of massive academic tomes like this one. These ideas matter for real ministries—in every sphere and vocation—in our world today. And in that sense, despite my quibbles, this book fulfills its stated goal. For anyone looking for a one-stop shop for (almost) everything neo-Calvinism, I recommend it.

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