the early 1500s. Through a thorough comparison of all of Tyndale's writings with those of Luther, Bucer and Zwingli, Dembek convincingly argues that Tyndale faithfully introduces the essential teachings of the Reformation to the English reading public but always in his own distinct voice. The Leitmotiv of Tyndale's Scripture-derived theology is that the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith leads to the healing of the human will. Behind Tyndale's emphasis on obedience is a conviction that the power of God's gracious love inspires in the hearts of his grateful children an abiding love for keeping his law. Luther as well believed that the conversion of the hearts of believers towards God would lead to their conversion to the loving service of their neighbours. Unlike Bucer, however, Luther famously declined to assign the tertius usus legis such a prominent role in this process.

If William Clebsch always considered Tyndale's deviations from Luther a negative sign of incipient Puritan moralism and Carl Trueman's superior study still examined Tyndale's writings through a systematic grid of doctrinal commonplaces, Dembek's approach is to honour Tyndale's (as well as Luther's) exegetically-driven theological method. As indicated by the subtitle of his book – 'Reformation theology as contextual scriptural interpretation' – Dembek simply follows the historical order of Tyndale's life and writings, carefully noting each new work's theological reflections on the Bible as well as tracking the trajectory of their development over time. Consequently, Dembek's singular achievement has been to allow Tyndale's distinctive doctrinal voice to be heard afresh, the voice of a European reformer, even if spoken with an English accent.


This is an extremely useful and important book. The weekly bible study meetings (congrégations) held in Geneva were as much a part of the religious life of the city as the sermons, the Consistory meetings and the meetings of the Company of Pastors (the latter two also weekly). However, these bible studies have never been the object of detailed academic study. The great value of this work, though, is not just that it discusses the congrégations but that it does so from so many different perspectives and in such depth. Basically, these meetings were an opportunity for Geneva's ministers to examine and discuss each other's hermeneutical and theological skills in a public setting which invited debate in a collegiate environment. De Boer looks at the weekly meeting as an institution (including its background), what it can tell us about the theological issues and viewpoints discussed by the ministers, the type of lay people who attended, as well as key theological debates and hermeneutical 'projects' (election, Calvin's sermonic schedules, the harmony of the Law, and discussions on Galatians, Joshua and Isaiah). What one gets is not just an in-depth view of the active discussion of the Bible and theology in Geneva among the ministers but a real sense of the role that
this played in the spiritual life and development of Geneva. These discussions were public; lay people listened to their ministers discussing, debating and developing biblical interpretation over the years, every week. It is hardly surprising that such an important methodology for harmonising belief, hermeneutic and, thus, the preaching delivered by a society’s ministerial cadre was attractive to, and copied by others. De Boer closes his discussion by examining the wider impact of the congrégations in France and beyond (especially their impact on religious refugees in England and Netherlands – one quibble would be the subsuming of ‘Knox and the Scots’ into a chapter ostensibly about ‘England’). The volume also appends some extremely useful information, including the translation of forty propositions (outlines of the ministers’ presentations) in the period c. 1545–51 ranging from ‘providence and predestination’ and the ‘right to take taxes’ (by the little-known Pierre Ninaud and Nicolas Petit, respectively) to Nicolas des Gallars on ‘election’ and Michel Cop on ‘the knowledge of God’. De Boer has provided an invaluable study which, more than most, gives a real insight into how biblical interpretation fed and underpinned theology and, together, led to exposition and discussion in the spiritual development of a godly society in Geneva under the guidance of a ministerial cohort publicly striving for harmony and consistency in the presentation of God’s Word to their congregations via their weekly congrégations.

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