

Book Reviews

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Kahled Anatolios, ed., *The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church*, Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History (Baker Academic, 2014), 272 pages, \$30.

Since World War II there has been a resurgence of interest in trinitarian theology due, in part, to the prolific work of Karl Barth. This “massive revival,” as Alister McGrath called it, is enhanced by the contributions of Kahled Anatolios and the writers he has drawn together in *The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church*. The special contribution of this volume is alluded to in the series title: it is a study in *patristic* theology and history. Further, it focuses on the work of theologians from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, with some reference to Augustine and an interesting, if not somewhat out of place, chapter devoted to Martin Luther.

Covenanters should be aware that some aspects of Orthodox theology may be unfamiliar since Pietism is historically rooted in the Reformation, therefore using thought and language developed within the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Certain terms central to Orthodox theology, but likely less recognizable to Protestants, punctuate the text, such as “*deification*,” “*perichoresis*,” “*theosis*,” and “*anaphora*.” Similarly, the names of Orthodox theological authorities (simply, “the fathers”), such as Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus, may be less

familiar to non-Orthodox readers than Aquinas or Calvin. However, it is precisely in these less familiar areas readers will experience the reward of this rich volume, for it was these fathers, especially the great Cappadocians, who fleshed out the biblical texts to frame the doctrine of the Trinity. Anatolios's work does a great favor for those steeped in Western theology by bringing them back to the Greek theologians, perhaps even motivating them to read the fathers for themselves.

The idea of this volume is clear enough. The authors' intent is to illuminate the doctrine of the Trinity and explain how it works itself out "in the concrete life of the church" (p. xi). Three sections give structure to the book. The first relates the trinitarian doctrine to Christian worship, the second to Christian salvation, and the third to the church. In light of its applied aim, the material gives attention to how the lofty and mysterious truth of God's threeness-yet-oneness has implications for life and ministry. In particular, Kathleen McVey's brief examination of patristic feminine metaphors for God is riveting and has direct implications for contemporary liturgy.

With this in mind, the reader should be prepared to occasionally encounter dense theology. Do not expect to breeze through this volume. These specialists in trinitarian studies have analyzed the nuances of Greek terms and have applied their intellectual scalpels to parsing the subtle differences between Eastern and Western conceptions of the Trinity. The book is not a lightweight attempt to simplify doctrine; it is an intensive effort to better understand the God who exists eternally in a mysterious communion of three persons in one *ousia*, "a circle of glory" (Gregory of Nyssa). So, even as one's mind swirls amidst the profound concepts being considered, the reader also gets caught up in moments of worship as the fathers of Eastern Orthodoxy break out in praise of this ineffable God: "O Holy Trinity, glory to you." If for no other reason, this volume is worthy to be read because its subject is worthy of glory.

ERIC SORENSON

Paul Peter Waldenström, *Squire Adamsson, or Where Do You Live? An Allegorical Tale from the Swedish Awakening*, translation with introduction and notes by Mark Safstrom (Pietisten, 2014) 290 pages, \$24.99.

Peter Paul Waldenström's novel, *Squire Adamsson, or Where Do You Live?* is a welcome contribution to studies in Covenant history. The

allegorical tale, based on a series of sermons and vignettes, reveals the dynamics of the Swedish Awakening and the spiritual turmoil that attended the waves of emigration from Sweden during the nineteenth century. According to Safstrom, the novel evokes the memories of places where people gathered from near and far to meet and encourage one another, such as the health spas that Waldenström's followers frequented and that provided the backdrop of his sermons.

Waldenström's inventive allegory about the emotional struggle of the Swedish Awakening first appeared as his controversial movement clashed with established Lutheran theology and tradition. The story presents Waldenström's quarrels with traditional Lutheran teachings and elucidates the ordeal of salvation and sanctification by describing the struggles of ordinary people whose efforts to find security, admiration, and respect also become spiritual battles. It reverses the traditional perceptions of the times; simple and elderly women receive more favored attention, while clergy and preachers receive robust criticism. The characters experience continual spiritual torment, beset by many choices about where to live and uncertainty about whom they can trust.

Squire Adamsson moves from one city to another, receiving advice from a number of characters as he wonders whether or not he is doing enough to be righteous, dutiful, or sanctified. Characters such as Mother Simple, Mother Wounded Hip, Bankrupt Faith, and Conscience continually speak to him about the understanding of grace as a free gift, not a work, while he meanders through a full spectrum of feelings from inadequacy to pride. Squire Adamsson becomes Squire Abrahamsson when he accepts grace and moves to Evangelium. But the story does not end here. His experiences range from pride in his accomplishments, salvation and relief from his canceled debt, uncertainty about Immanuel's promises, and a continual wandering through cities that seem to promise more than the poor, humble provisions of Evangelium. Grace and forgiveness is at the city's center, but neither seems to interest him enough to keep him happy at home.

Adamsson's tale may leave the reader frustrated at several points. He is a fickle man, and Mother Simple's love and concern for him are hard to understand. The same uncertainty and inconstancy plague Adamsson so frequently that a typical Christian would have given up on him. Modern readers may have a difficult time maintaining interest in his spiritual state, which is why this narrative might be more useful in understanding the revival itself than in providing the devotional counsel it did for

earlier readers. Even Waldenström needed an editor to pare down the many episodes of despair, impulsivity, and uncertainty that the subject makes us endure.

Today we experience as radical a transformation in society as that experienced by Waldenström's original readers. In particular, a communications revolution undermines the traditional means of instilling faith. An allegorical tale such as Waldenström's novel, so radically innovative in its time, may have a hard time reaching individual believers or hearers today. However, Waldenström's memorable characters and useful vignettes provide short moral lessons. The novel contextualized to the modern audience would prove an effective resource for the church at large.

MARIA ERLING

The Swedish Pietists: A Reader: Excerpts from the Writings of Carl Olof Rosenius and Paul Peter Waldenström, edited, translated, and introduced by Mark Safstrom (Pickwick Publications, 2015), 237 pages, \$24.

Tell someone you are a Pietist these days and you are likely to get a quizzical look. This is in spite of the fact that, for better and for worse, Pietism was instrumental in shaping the character of American evangelicalism. Even denominations with Pietist roots often know little and care less about this heritage. Within the Evangelical Covenant Church, the Evangelical Free Church, and the former General Conference Baptist Church—all churches birthed from the Swedish revivals—fewer and fewer of the songs are sung, Pietist distinctives acknowledged, and great names recognized. An additional problem is that, although both C.O. Rosenius and P.P. Waldenström were prolific writers, very little of their work has been translated into English. A few of Waldenström's famous sermons and short works have been translated, but for the most part even these are relatively inaccessible or long out of print.

In light of this, Mark Safstrom, lecturer in Swedish and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Illinois, has done a real service by editing and translating a collection of the writings of Rosenius and Waldenström. In his introduction he describes his fascination with a collection of “dusty, but beautifully bound” books in his grandparents' basement. The books had belonged to his great-grandparents who had been “readers” in the revival movement in Sweden before immigrating to the United States. These books and their accounts of the lives and thoughts of early

Pietists sparked Safstrom's lifelong interest in the Swedish language and the literature of the Swedish Pietists. In addition to the current volume, Safstrom has also translated Waldenström's widely read allegorical tale *Squire Adamsson* (Pietisten, 2014).

Although Rosenius and Waldenström were colleagues and collaborators, they were very different men. Rosenius was a layperson and resistant to additional training, going so far as to refuse ordination. He understood his role as speaking as a layperson, as a simple believer, to and on behalf of other simple believers. His writings reflect his concern. Again and again he returns to the questions of ordinary Swedish Christians. How does one grow in the faith? How does one confront sin and live a holy life? How does one find assurance of salvation?

Waldenström was a very different man. He held a doctorate in theology and classical languages and was ordained in the state church. Near the end of his volume, Safstrom provides a translation of Waldenström's ordination sermon that pretty nearly derailed his ordination before it occurred. Waldenström was forced to placate an angry bishop before it could go forward. Waldenström was concerned, as was Rosenius, that individuals through faith in Jesus find peace with God and grow in that faith. But he pursued the logic of the Reformation in ways that perhaps would have distressed Rosenius.

Waldenström's great contribution was to attack the notion that Jesus's death was intended to appease the wrath of God. He rejected the idea that God needed to be reconciled. *Sinners* needed to be reconciled to God, not God to sinners. Waldenström considered "heathen" the idea that Jesus was sacrificed to appease a wrathful God. In a striking piece entitled "Punished by God," he writes:

We imagine that God is such that he cannot be appeased unless he is able to strike back. If he is going to spare the guilty person, then he must have someone else to strike in his place. And people call this righteousness.... But God is not like this. This image of God we can leave to the heathens, who are lacking God's word. Our God is a God who out of his great mercy sent his only begotten son Jesus into the world, not in order to strike him in our place, but in order to deliver us from our sins, make us pure and holy and transport us home to God again, away from whom we had fallen. (p. 84)

Small wonder this got Waldenström in trouble with the religious authori-

ties! His views on the atonement caused a rift within the revival movement and were instrumental in the formation of the so-called “free church movement” among the Scandinavians in both Europe and the United States.

Reading Waldenström is at times exhilarating. He calls his readers and hearers to look again at the text. He questions received traditions and settled opinions. If we are going to be people of the book, he seems to insist, let’s make sure we actually know what it says. I find myself wishing for more in English about this fascinating man. Mark Safstrom deserves our thanks for this wonderful and helpful volume. Is it too much to ask that he now consider a theological biography of Waldenström?

JOHN E. PHELAN JR.