

Machiel A. van den Berg, *Friends of Calvin*, trans. Reinder Bruinsma (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2009), xii+266 pages.

John Calvin's delight in and dependence on a number of close friends has long been known to Calvin scholars, but this new work by a Dutch Reformed pastor provides an easily accessible study of this crucial aspect of the life of the French Reformer. In a word, this book is a gem. It reads well, is rooted in solid scholarship, and contains much that is fascinating. Some friends, like his ministerial co-workers, Gullaume Farel and Pierre Viret, are familiar to most who have read a little about Calvin's life. Other friendships, like that with the Dutch couple Lord and Lady de Falais, are much less known. All of them reveal how significant these friendships were for the European Reformation and for Calvin's own personal spiritual maturity.

Reading these delightful sketches it is evident that what gave these friendships a depth unmatched by many friendships of our day was the conviction that these relationships were God-wrought and eternal. As Calvin wrote to Philip Melancthon in a classic description of the nature of Christian friendship, "The distance in place cannot prevent us—content with the bond that Christ has established through his blood and has enclosed in our hearts through his Spirit—from holding on to the hope...that we will in the end live together eternally and in eternal enjoyment of our love and friendship" (p.ix).

Essential reading!

Michael A.G. Haykin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky.