plaatsvinden, dan zou Hij x niet hebben laten plaatsvinden. (Dit is een specifieke van het volgende principe dat Van Inwagen verwerpt: “If one is in a position to prevent some evil, one should not allow that evil to occur — not unless allowing it to occur would result in some good that would outweigh it or preventing it would result in some other evil at least as bad.” (p. 100))

Er is nog meer in het boek dat de mocite waard is, zoals Van Inwagens behandeling van het probleem van prelapsariaans kwaad en de verborgenheid van God in deze wereld. Al met al is het een boek dat, ondanks zijn geringe omvang, gekenmerkt wordt door de behandeling van een enorme verscheidenheid aan filosofische problemen. Dit maakt het, tezamen met Van Inwagens glasheldere redeneertrant en droge analytische humor, tot een memorabel werk, dat naar alle waarschijnlijkheid de komende decennia van belang zal blijven in de discussie over een van de meest pertinente problemen in de apologetische discussie.

H. D. Peels


Lieuwe Mietus is a pastor in the Federation of Free Evangelical Churches in the Netherlands (Bond van Vrije Evangelische Gemeenten in Nederland), and a lecturer at that church’s seminary in Utrecht. In 2006, he obtained his doctorate from the Theological University in Kampen, with a dissertation on J. H. Gunning, Jr. (1829-1905). It is a most impressive scholarly work, the result of eight years of research. It is important not only for understanding the Christian theosophical influences in Gunning’s theology, but also for understanding the roots of reformational philosophy. For in the 1860’s, Gunning introduced Christian theosophical ideas to other representatives of Dutch Protestantism, such as Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920).

The term ‘Christian theosophy’ will sound strange to many reformational philosophers. The word ‘theosophy’ literally means “the Wisdom of God.” Christian theosophy is a tradition that extends from Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) to William Law (1686-1761), Friedrich Christian Oetinger (1702-1782), Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803), and Franz von Baader (1763-1841), and from Baader to others, including Gunning and Kuyper. Mietus points out that Gunning also influenced his friend D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, the founding father of “ethical theology.” Ethical theology emphasized that God is a living, holy and loving Person, as well as the idea of man’s rebirth, which restores man’s personality from its distortions caused by the fall into sin.

Mietus restricts his study to the years 1863-1876, because that was the time that Gunning was most influenced by Christian theosophical authors like Boehme, Oetinger, Baader, J. Hamberger, F. Fabri, Ph. Th. Culmann, G.H. von Schubert, C.A. Auberlen and others. In later years, Gunning’s interest in
theosophy was less pronounced, but nevertheless still important (Mietus 280-282). Christian theosophical ideas helped Gunning to respond to the problems raised by nineteenth century modernism. He opposed the naturalistic views of science and culture, which lead to the annihilation of Christian faith. Instead, Gunning struggled to attain a living faith and a living church.

Mietus is careful to emphasize the orthodox nature of Christian theosophy, as found in Gunning and Baader. Christian theosophy is theistic, and holds firmly to the Christian ideas of creation and redemption of the world and of men by God. Relying on the previous work of Antoine Faivre and Peter Koslowski, Mietus contrasts Christian theosophy with the later theosophy of Madame Blavatsky (Mietus 11-17). Here is a summary of some Christian theosophical ideas that Mietus finds in Gunning:

1. Christian theosophy emphasizes the role of God’s Wisdom, or Sophia. Wisdom is not a Person distinct from the Trinity, but it is the mirror of God:

   For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unsotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness (Wisdom 7:26).

   Sophia, the original mirror of God, mirrors itself in the nature of God. By His Wisdom, God expresses Himself in his “nature.”

2. God’s divine nature must not be confused with the nature of created reality. Baader introduced the philosopher Schelling to the ideas of Boehme. But Baader criticized both Schelling and Hegel for failing to distinguish between these two “natures”—the natura non creata creatus and the temporal natura creata. Schelling and Hegel confused the non-creaturely process that exists in God with the processes that occur within creation as an image or copy (Abbildung) of the divine process. Baader disagreed with their pantheistic and Gnostic views, and in particular with their view that God was required to create the world in order to fulfill Himself (a view also found in today’s “process theology”). W.J. Hanegraaff maintains that Baader did not interpret Boehme correctly, and that Boehme was in fact pantheistic (Mietus 114 fn104). But Mietus emphasizes that Baader and Hamberger interpreted Boehme in an anti-pantheistic way, rejecting any pantheistic identification of the two natures. It is this interpretation that is of importance in understanding Gunning, especially his most important works Blikken in de Openbaring (1866-1869) and Spinoza en de Idee der Persoonlijkheid (1876) (Mietus 71-74, 89-95, 122).

3. Thus, it was not necessary for God to create; God is independent of His creation. But God creates in order to let “other beings” share in His Glory, and for His own self-revelation, to “open” His eternal nature (Mietus 96, 112). By an act of love, God freely creates and reveals Himself by the expression of His Wisdom. This was a central idea for Gunning, and it is related to Baader’s idea of a nature in God. Gunning believed that this was the only way to overcome the depersonalization of the idea of God, and the devaluation of Christianity by modernist thinkers of his time. In emphasizing God’s freedom of creation,