of Christianity” (103), which he never wrote due to his early death. Like Descartes, he wrote out of concern to counter skepticism, such as that of Michel de Montaigne. Unlike Descartes, Pascal accepted first principles (109) in order to avoid an infinite regress. At this point—or earlier, in the chapter on Aristotle—Groothuis might have let the reader know that appeal to (and explanation of) first principles began with Aristotle. Nevertheless, one certainly ought to appreciate his insistence that Pascal provides a great counter to materialism and ably investigates self-deception.

Finally, for the seventh sentence, Groothuis turns to the Danish existential philosopher Kierkegaard: “The greatest hazard of all, losing one’s self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all.” I will leave it to readers to enjoy Groothuis’ exploration of Kierkegaard, including his attempt, to the “horror and honour” of Kierkegaard, to syllogize an argument for God’s existence from Kierkegaard’s The Sickness Unto Death (134). Groothuis’ introduction will certainly assist anyone seeking to enter this work of Kierkegaard’s, and I can only hope that some readers might indeed take the plunge.

Throughout this short work, Groothuis displays a knack for sourcing memorable one-liners from a variety of philosophers and Christian thinkers and relating philosophical ideas to current events and daily life, showing thereby the breadth of his own reading and experience. Here and there, he notes that he is unable to deal with certain important philosophers, yet they are mentioned, and, at times, aspects of their thought are woven into the work. He also gives us a sense of the conversations of philosophers across the ages, as they have interacted with each other on certain questions (cf. Norman Melchert, The Great Conversation). I truly enjoyed reading Philosophy in Seven Sentences, and, in spite of the small concerns I have noted, I will certainly recommend it to the MDiv students in my philosophy class as supplementary reading. Anyone desiring a refresher in philosophy would also benefit from it, and it would be a great little book to overcome the objections of friends who have little use for philosophy.

—Theodore G. Van Raalte


To the extent that he is known at all among Protestants within the Reformed family, Andrew Melville (1545–1622) is recognized as a second-generation Scots Reformer closely associated with the production of the more complete Second Book of Discipline (1578), superseding an inadequate First Book, produced in 1560. Those whose familiarity with Melville extends that far may
also be aware that having exasperated both King James VI as Scotland’s monarch and (after 1603) James I as England’s monarch, Melville suffered imprisonment in England from which he was only delivered through his acceptance of exile to France where he died in 1622.

Even this level of familiarity with Melville has been the legacy primarily of his early nineteenth-century biographer, Thomas McCrie, whose *Life of Melville* was released in 1819, and secondarily through a work, the *Autobiography and Diary* (available to McCrie in manuscript form), of Melville’s nephew, James Melville (subsequently published in 1842). Both because his memory has been relatively neglected (no modern work on Melville appeared until 2011) and because his role in late sixteenth-century Scotland has been hotly contested, it is past time for a reassessment of Melville such as is provided in the volume at hand.

One has only to consult this volume’s table of contents to perceive how blinkered has been our perspective on this Scot. It is not that what we know already is misleading (in fact it has been true, so far as it goes), it is that Andrew Melville was a far more talented and complex figure than we have been led to believe. French and Geneva-educated in the decade following the settlement of Scotland’s Reformation settlement (1560), Melville came home to Scotland having been professor of humanities in the Geneva Academy. His initial task was to teach Oriental languages and theology; in the former role, he pioneered Hebrew instruction. As one with advanced humanist training, Melville reformed the curriculum in the universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen, and St. Andrews. Melville was an educator first and foremost; he was never a minister of Scotland’s Reformed Church, though highly active in its General Assemblies.

Three chapters focus on Melville’s views on kingship and the state. Although regularly categorized as an enemy of monarchy and defender of rebellion, Melville is shown to have been much less incendiary than a Scot of the preceding generation, George Buchanan (1506–1582), who is credited with setting out a basis for Christian resistance theory (chapter 1). Melville was in fact a strong monarchist and a loyal (though not uncritical) supporter of his king (chapter 2). He strongly favored the joint rule of Scotland with England by the Stuart dynasty, though he viewed the then-current ambitions of Spain for a vast empire as a worrisome template that—if followed by Britain—would surely lead to tyranny at home and abroad (chapter 3).

Four additional chapters of the volume focus on Melville’s considerable abilities as a man of letters. He wrote extensive Latin verse (a selection of which appears in an extended appendix). Melville wielded his pen to compose verse opposing Episcopal government (chapter 5), to castigate the perpetrators of the “Gunpowder Plot” against the English parliament in 1605 (chapter 6), and as a Latin versifier of the Psalms (chapter 7).
prowess also in Greek, he was the author of a commentary on Romans (chapter 4).

For this reader, however, the most rewarding portion of this impressive collection of essays came in two final chapters. In the penultimate chapter, John McCallum explores the relationship between Andrew Melville and his nephew James; it is a model of sensitive writing that explores the human and relational side of two lives. Certain paradoxes are present: Andrew Melville (the uncle) is by far the more famous, but James (the nephew) accomplished far more in literary terms, leaving behind more accessible writings. Separated in age by slightly more than a decade, the nephew was indebted to his uncle for improving his education and helping him find his way in the world after a testy relationship with his natural father. Of largely the same views, James was the more diplomatic and temperate compared to his fiery uncle; both suffered exile from Scotland at the whim of King James, newly arrived in the English capital in 1603.

The final chapter, “The Making of Andrew Melville” provides a most satisfying historiographical account of how notions regarding this Scot have been passed down to us. The writer, Caroline Erskine, upends the conventional wisdom, which has attributed the stereotypes to nineteenth-century biographer McCrie and the then-unpublished manuscript diary of James Melville. She argues that polemical seventeenth-century royalist writers in England and Scotland—such as John Spottiswoode (1565–1639)—determined to find targets who symbolized resistance to Stuart policies in both state and church fastened on Andrew Melville with astonishing long-term effect. It is to such writers of the seventeenth century that we owe the portraiture of an Andrew Melville who was a fiery emissary of Beza’s Geneva, determined to reshape an inchoate Scottish Reformed Church in its second decade into a self-consciously Presbyterian entity. Erskine’s surprising conclusion is that such writers exaggerated Melville’s actual importance for the purpose of employing him as the “face” of obstructionism to the Stuart program.

In sum, this nuanced volume helps us to see that in the post-John-Knox era of Scotland’s late Reformation Andrew Melville was a more complex figure than the mere contrarian we have heard he was. It also assists us to see that the second generation of Reform in Scotland that moved to consolidate a Presbyterian polity was considerably less reliant on his leadership than has been alleged.

—Kenneth J. Stewart