

## BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade, A New History: The Roots of Conflict between Christianity and Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Pp. xvi + 408. ISBN 0-19-517823-8. \$35.00.

Few things are more disputed or discussed today than the swirl of issues surrounding the relationship between Islam and the West. Note carefully that I say “the West” and not “the Christian religion.” Christendom, or the domination of the Christian religion in all of society’s institutions, including the state, no longer exists, as it did during the time of the Crusades when West versus East meant Christendom versus Islam. While much of Islam may view the current Iraq War and even the September 11, 2001, attacks as part of the historic battle of Christian versus Muslim, and while there are elements of that classic warfare present in the current struggles, we must never identify the actions of the American (or any other) government with those of the Christian church.

While we may rightly lament the secularization of the state and other societal institutions, we should not confuse secularization with the question of the institutional separation of the church and the state. There are confessional Christians nowadays who see the institutional separation of the two as a Western, or even more, an American historical oddity that has proven to be a bane rather than a blessing, contributing signally to the irreligiousness and immorality of the West, which suffers, frankly, from the separation of God and state, not simply church and state as institutions. The institutional separation of church and state is, I believe, a proper development of the Reformation and is indeed biblical (even in the theocracy of the Old Testament, king and priest were separate offices attending to separate spheres and were not to be commingled without penalty). This institutional separation of church and state is something that Islam does not enjoy and apparently does not understand. Muslims

assume that if a political entity that has many professed Christians in it, as does the United States, is at war with them, then Christianity is at war with them, because they make no distinction between the Christian religion and the civil and political bodies in which Christians (and others) may live.

There may be overlap (and there is) between church and state at various points, yet they are distinct entities; and whatever war the American national government may wage should not be mistaken for a war waged by the Christian church itself (which is not biblically authorized as an entity to wage war). This is not to suggest that America has no just grounds for some sort of war in the aftermath of 9/11. That is not a matter that need concern us in this review. Rather, it is simply to remind us of the distinction that must be made between the church and the state, a distinction stemming from the days of the theocracy in Israel and the in-gathering of the nations after Pentecost. And that it is a distinction utterly lost and seemingly ungraspable by Islam, but should not be lost on anyone. At least this much, and other observations that will follow, needs to be kept in mind if one is to know what to make of Thomas Asbridge's *First Crusade, A New History*.

As fine as this work is on many counts, it ultimately fails to understand properly the broader dimensions of the conflict between the two religions and tends to lament the Crusades, in which there is much to regret, without understanding the real nature of either religion and the important distinctions between them. Christianity is not, at heart, warlike; and when the institutional church seeks to advance its cause with "swords loud clashing," it acts at variance with its true impulse and it will always appear, rightly so, as monstrous in such cases. Islam, on the other hand, is quite at home in taking the field of battle to forward itself; when it does so, it is acting in proper accord with its deepest impulses. Nowhere are these important considerations recognized by Asbridge, which oversight constitutes a significant interpretative failure on the part of our author and his work.

As to style, Asbridge's book is a pleasure to read. It is one of those non-fiction books so well written that it often reads like a good story. The scholarship that underlies the book (Asbridge personally traced the path of the entire First Crusade, much of it on foot) is modestly displayed and does not intrude itself into the story so that the non-specialist is overwhelmed by all the primary and secondary sources that clearly underlie his tale. This is a good book,

then, for anyone to read who wants better to understand what prompted the Crusades, how the First Crusade was carried out, and what its results, long- and short-term, were. Asbridge gives us the cast of characters from clerics (Adhemar of Le Puy, Peter the Hermit, et al.) to noblemen (Raymond of Toulouse, Bohemond of Taranto, et al.) to rulers, most notably Emperor Alexius I. He takes us through the preaching of the Crusades, the preparation and leave-taking, the unthinkable Jewish pogroms in the Rhineland, the rapacious People's Crusade, the arrival in Byzantium, the trek across Asia Minor (including important battles in Nicaea and Dorylaeum), the "double" siege of Antioch, the movement to and, finally, capture of Jerusalem, and its aftermath. Along the way, Asbridge recounts bravery, treachery, greed, self-seeking, piety, superstition, and all that went into this amazing journey. I could write of so many instances of stupidity as well as ingenuity and seeming miracle. Read his account for a tantalizing narrative that is indeed a page-turner.

But it's the overall interpretation that Asbridge gives to the Crusades and the way in which he frames them that warrant some scruples, and larger objections, on the part of the reader. Asbridge begins his analysis of the First Crusade, more specifically, and the whole crusading impulse or movement, more broadly, by noting that the reform Pope Gregory VII and his successor Urban II, who proclaimed and preached the First Crusade in 1095-96, successfully modified the earlier vision of Christianity, which was originally, according to Asbridge, pacifistic. This changed in the aftermath of Constantine's conversion, particularly in the theology of St. Augustine, who, by his "just war" theory, promulgated what Asbridge called "justified violence." In the Crusades, the teaching arose that not only was violence justified in the stopping of aggressors or in cases of self-defense (as in just war theory), but also that violence perpetrated against godless pagans (the Muslims, in this case) in the reclaiming of Christian lands was sanctified.

The Crusades ensued. Even as monasticism had replaced martyrdom (after the end of Roman persecution) as the ascetic high road for serious Christians, so the crusading impulse appealed to an active war-faring lay class to whom contemplative monasticism never appealed. And no small part of the crusading appeal was that one could garner the kind of spiritual brownie points that were associated usually with entering the monastery, and perhaps accrue even more on a crusade, without having to take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience: something of "see the world, enjoy

adventure, and earn salvation, too.” The adventure part can be easily overplayed; while it is the case that no one knew how arduous the journey would be before it was undertaken, even before leaving, many greater and lesser noblemen, as well as the common folk, keenly sensed the enormity of the undertaking and the peril that such a journey placed them in. In other words, the crusaders did not rush pell-mell into the fray merely for sake of adventure or even because the younger untitled sons of the nobility had nothing better to do (Asbridge effectively debunks that canard, along with a number like it). The crusaders were prompted by spiritual, albeit misguided, considerations.

Asbridge rightly recognizes that what motivated so many to go at such cost to “reclaim the Holy Land for Christendom” (the stated papal and regal purpose of the Crusade) was not personal wealth, adventure, glory, etc., at least in the first instance, but was to gain salvation. And this runs us smack into the whole medieval soteriology in which, Asbridge asserts, it was not clear to Christians in 1095 “what would happen to their souls after death” (p. 72). The Roman church taught that there was a judgment day approaching, that all would face judgment “immediately upon death and that any taint of sin would earn them punishment,” and that alms-giving, along with other acts of penance, would prove efficacious in removing the stain of sin. The “Church was careful to avoid any direct assertion that Christians might crudely buy their way to salvation, preferring instead to suggest that donors might, in God’s eyes, become enshrouded in an aura of merit. Nevertheless, most laymen imagined a direct link between donation and salvation” (p. 73). Donations, historically, had gone, especially from royal and noble coffers, to the monasteries. The Crusades, by the assurance of the pope himself, as well as his envoys, provided an even more certain way of performing the good deeds necessary for salvation.

In this sense, then, the crusading impulse may be seen as an outworking of a “works theology,” as well as an effective way of plugging in to the dynamic of Middle Age’s feudalism and warfare approved and even sponsored by the church. Previously, warfare was thought to stain the hands and no military man would ever have the kind of place in the kingdom that only the secular and regular clergy enjoyed. With the Crusades, that changed and now a man could remain without a vocation to the priesthood, retain his place in civil society, and even have his warring activities regarded as sanctifying because they were done on behalf of Christ and his

church. Certainly, Asbridge, in exposing these deficient views about salvation, demonstrates the need for reformation.

While Asbridge gets these soteriological issues right, what he misses is that Christianity never required pacifism on the part of its adherents. Christianity itself, to be sure, as a spiritual kingdom, did not take the sword (which it taught was reserved for the state), but also did not prohibit her followers from serving as soldiers or conceive of the state and its exercise of the sword in the way that later Anabaptists, for instance, did. It is almost as if Asbridge has read Tolstoy's pacifistic exposition on the Sermon on the Mount as controlling for and constitutive of the ancient church. Similarly, contra Asbridge, Augustine engaged in a proper development of biblical teaching in his just war theory. To be sure, the Crusades overextended Augustine's argument and the theory that the violence of the Crusades was sanctifying for the pilgrims is simply further evidence of their soteriological confusion.

This book, I feel bound here to repeat, reads like a novel and is quite worth reading for a number of reasons. But, like so many other takes on religion in a multi-cultural, pluralistic society, it gives short shrift to Christianity. The subtitle is telling: "the roots of conflict between Islam and Christianity." The First Crusade is the root of conflict between Islam and Christianity? To be fair, this subtitle, it appears to me, may have been given by the publisher. Even so, the First Crusade was not the root of conflict between the two religions but a response, mistaken though it may have been in many of its aspects, to what happened following the death of Mohammed in A.D. 632. The violence in Mohammed's own life, from 622-632, against those who would not bow to his conception of Allah, and then the hundred years of conquest that followed, in the time of the caliphate, from 632-732, should be seen as the roots of the conflict between Christianity and Islam. And though there was a monstrous institutional mingling of church and state in this whole undertaking, rulers could argue that they were delivering oppressed peoples (who had been reduced to dhimmitude, servile to their Muslim overlords, forbidden from proselytizing and required to give much of their wealth to the Muslims) and justify such on the basis of just war theory. Had the grandfather of Charlemagne, Charles Martel ("the Hammer"), not stopped the invading Muslims in 732, all of Europe might have been overrun.

Perhaps what Asbridge means when he describes apostolic and early church Christianity as pacifistic is that it was not militant,

fleshly, driven by or dependent on, conquest in battle. But Islam was. Islam had militarism at its very heart from its inception. When the church as an institution was militaristic, it was betraying the Bible. When Islam was militaristic, it was, at least in many cases, carrying out the injunctions of its holy book, the Quran. To be sure, in the Middle Ages, when Christendom still existed, there was less of an understanding of the proper distinction between the church and state as institutions, and the church did not always appear in its most distinctive, and thus biblical, form. The papacy claimed at its height under Innocent IV and then in the bull issued by Boniface VIII in 1302 (*Unam Sanctum*) institutional supremacy over the civil sphere. On the other hand, in the Investiture Controversy (1122) the state had claimed the right of the king to invest the bishop with the symbols of his office and many civil magistrates in the Reformation continued to insist that they possessed, by virtue of their civil offices, ecclesiastical privileges—seen, for instance, in Calvin's battles in Geneva with the civil authorities. What the Reformers did with the question of the relationship between the church and state as institutions, whether it involved a repristination of sorts of Augustine's two cities, or a two-kingdom theory, or whatever approaches that appreciated their proper distinction, Islam enjoys nothing of this and it seems lost on Asbridge.

The claim that Islam is tolerant, as made by so many these days, is hollow. The Muslims spared some Jews and Christians as people of the book during the years of initial conquest (632-732), it is alleged. Yes, but they reduced them to dhimmitude and built much of their great medieval culture, as the one that the Moors erected in Iberia, on the back of Jewish, Christian, and Western-pagan monetary and intellectual contributions. The Crusades, misguided as they were in combining the institutions of church and state and in sanctifying horrific brutality, can also be seen, along with the *Reconquista* of later centuries, as an attempt to liberate lands taken earlier from Christians. Christians should not be given a pass either for their indefensible behavior in the Crusades or for their utterly unbiblical militarizing of the church and blurring the distinction between the keys and the sword. But secular historians like Asbridge have little right to excoriate only Christians in this matter, while ignoring the years of Muslim conquest that preceded the Crusades as well as the Muslim treatment of Christians (and Jews) in all the years that intervened between the Muslim expansion and the Crusades. There is much that is worthy in Asbridge's book. It is a

shame, however, that the politically correct requirement that one should be critical of Christianity, on the one hand, and be as sympathetic to and understanding as possible of Islam, on the other hand, should mar this scintillating account.

—Alan D. Strange

Vincent E. Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. 172, including bibliography and index. ISBN 0-8010-2740-3. \$18.99.

During the last several decades, a number of North American evangelical theologians have discovered Abraham Kuyper and embraced his vision for Christian engagement in the world. Just as Carl F. H. Henry stimulated evangelicals to cultural involvement with his influential work, *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism*, so the work and writings of Abraham Kuyper are stimulating a new interest in the nature of the Christian's calling in the broader social, political, economic and cultural affairs of modern society. Kuyper, who led a "neo-Calvinist" revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Netherlands, is often viewed as a figure who can contribute a rich and complex "public theology" to an evangelicalism that has frequently been characterized by a kind of "pietistic" withdrawal from the public square.

Bacote's study attests to this fascination with Kuyper on the part of North American evangelicals. Originally written as his doctoral dissertation, Bacote's work focuses upon Kuyper's articulation of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit's work within the whole created order. The thesis of Bacote's analysis of Kuyper's public theology is that evangelicalism needs to appropriate his fully Trinitarian, public theology, which ascribes an important role to the Spirit in preserving the created order and providing for the fulfillment of the cultural mandate. According to Bacote, Kuyper successfully linked his theology of culture with his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Kuyper was able, therefore, to provide a substantial theological rationale for the positive engagement of Christians in the public square. Bacote's thesis is that contemporary evangelicals need to develop and contextualize Kuyper's insights, if they hope to build their activities in the public square upon a platform that is principled and not merely pragmatic.

For those who are not well acquainted with Kuyper and his understanding of the Christian's calling in the world, this book will

likely prove to be a helpful introduction. For others who are acquainted with Kuyper and some of the debates regarding his development of the doctrine of “common grace,” Bacote’s study might seem to leave a few questions inadequately addressed. The publication of yet another study of Kuyper witnesses to the continuing impact and power of Kuyper’s Calvinist worldview and its implications for the Christian’s vocation in the world.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 256, including indexes. ISBN 0-8010-2746-2. \$19.99.

The co-authors of this volume teach at Redeemer University College in Ontario; Craig Bartholomew holds the H. Evan Runner Chair in Philosophy, and Michael Goheen is associate professor of Religion and Theology. Their work is written with first-year university students in mind, designed as a text for an introductory course in biblical theology.

At the heart of their approach is the view that Scripture is God’s true story of the world, revealing to us God’s journey on the long road of redemption. *The Drama of Scripture* provides an overview of the Bible’s unified, comprehensive story line, tracing its plot through the story’s six acts of creation, sin, Israel, Jesus, mission, and new creation. The story that Scripture narrates is foundational and normative for understanding the nature of all reality. Moreover, only as we read and appropriate the Bible “as our story,” through faith in and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, can we fully understand the Bible and submit to its authority over us. The Bible’s story is foundational to all Christian thinking and living in our world today.

God’s work from the beginning to the end of history is unified, progressive, comprehensive, and personal. So we must not treat Scripture as a mere collection of books, lessons, promises, and principles, or as a mosaic of disconnected bits of theology, ethics, sermon material, and devotional material.

Comparing Scripture to a cathedral with many entrances and angles, the authors present “covenant” (in the OT) and “the kingdom of God” (in the NT) as the main entrances into the



cathedral. Actually, since these are but two sides of the same coin, these form the “double door” opening the way into the cathedral.

Readers familiar with the work of Geerhardus Vos, Gordon Wenham, Herman Ridderbos, N. T. Wright, and Hendrikus Berkhof will recognize the framework (old age/new age) within which the biblical story is retold. Indeed, as a popularization and synthesis of the writings of these scholars, *The Drama of Scripture* will be a useful work for students of Scripture and a helpful resource for pastors and teachers looking for assistance in developing a compelling presentation of the biblical story.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2: *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt. Trans. John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 697, including indexes. ISBN 0-8010-2655-5. \$49.99 (cloth).

This is the second installment of the English translation of Bavinck’s four volume work *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (revised edition 1906-1911). Even as the first volume demonstrated that Bavinck was a Reformed theologian of superior rank, who evidenced a rich knowledge of the history of Reformed theology and the Christian tradition, with a peculiar gift to cut through theological tangles and arrive at sane and biblically balanced formulations, this second volume further illustrates these traits, and is indicative of the lasting achievement of Bavinck’s work. It is not hyperbole to say that Bavinck’s four volumes not only represent the best confessionally Reformed dogmatics produced in the twentieth century, it is probably the best *confessionally Reformed* dogmatics written, in any language, since the mid-eighteenth century. Indeed, Bavinck’s dogmatics illustrate how theology ought to be executed in our contemporary setting, even as his work shows how Christian theology, if it is to meet its responsibility, must engage the academy in order to serve the church—that is, theology must do its work in relation to the intellectual climate in which the church finds itself. This particular attribute marks Bavinck’s theological methodology as a whole, and is admirably displayed in his four volumes on Reformed theology.

More specifically, this second volume treats, indicative of its subtitle in English, God and creation. Following a fairly traditional arrangement of topics (the topics being gleaned from the

Scriptures), this volume in English translation divides the material into six parts: I. Knowing God (dealing with God's incomprehensibility and the knowledge of God, including the problem of atheism and an appraisal of the proofs for God's existence); II. The Living, Acting God (wherein is treated the names of God, his incommunicable and communicable attributes, along with a thorough biblical-historical analysis of the doctrine of the Trinity); III. God's Will on Earth as it is in Heaven (taking up the doctrine of God's counsel and the idea of creation); IV. Maker of Heaven and Earth (which considers in detail the creation of the spiritual and material world respectively); V. The Image of God (discussing human origins, human nature, and human destiny, that is, the covenant of works); and VI. God's Fatherly Care (which expounds the doctrine of divine providence). Parts IV through VI originally appeared in English in 1999 under the title *In the Beginning*, while the material covered in parts I-III first appeared in English in 1966, translated by William Hendriksen, entitled *The Doctrine of God*. With this new English translation, under the editorship of John Bolt, the whole of the second volume of Bavinck's dogmatics now appears together, and includes a comprehensive bibliography, a useful name and subject index, as well as a select Scripture index.

Bavinck's work, though reflective of the rich diversity of theological discussion characteristic of the early-twentieth century, proves itself to be relevant for the academic and ecclesiastical world of our times, especially since its theological methodology is neither biblicistic and ahistorical, nor does it succumb to speculation and historicism. Bavinck, unlike certain modern practitioners of the theological craft, does not refrain from making the move from exegesis to theological formulation. Nor does Bavinck serve up a theology that merely parrots one of the intellectual fads of the day. Instead, his dogmatics is characterized by a deep respect for Scripture, an intelligent grasp of the wider landscape of Christian theology, along with an intimate acquaintance with the Reformed tradition in its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century developments. Besides the above, Bavinck's work is marked by a perceptive awareness, coupled with a cogent analysis, of the philosophical forces that have shaped so much theological discussion. It is the combination of these characteristics that gives Bavinck's theological work its enduring quality.

Since it is beyond the scope of this review to summarize Bavinck's position on all the topics of theology covered in this

volume, we limit ourselves to several general observations on features of his dogmatic work—that is, features which in their own way serve to illustrate how Bavinck puts into practice the above mentioned characteristics.

Bavinck observes that dogmatics is bound to divine revelation, specifically to Scripture. This simple commitment has important implications for the doctrine of God. “The moment we step outside of the domain of this special revelation in Scripture,” Bavinck observes, “we find that in all religious and philosophical systems the unity of the personality and absoluteness of God is broken” (34). In Bavinck’s treatment of the doctrine of God he repeatedly shows how pantheism and deism threaten and entice, and he demonstrates how rival theologies to the biblical conception of God inevitably follow one of these paths in distinctive ways—either over accenting God’s immanence, blurring or obliterating the Creator/creature distinction or over emphasizing God’s transcendence, producing an aloof and irrelevant God. Both are idols and render God impersonal. Indeed, Bavinck demonstrates how the scriptural portrait of God maintains the unity of God’s personality and absoluteness; God is neither an abstract Absolute nor an relativistic Process. Bavinck’s entire discussion of the doctrine of God continually steers between these errant paths.

Turning to the divine Trinity, the reader will find that Bavinck’s treatment of this profound Christian doctrine is biblically sensitive, historically well-informed, and theologically Western in orientation. For Bavinck, confessing God as triune is the soul of the Christian faith; virtually all error proceeds from a corruption of this doctrine. The technical, *extra*-biblical language that the church has employed in order to define and explicate this doctrine exposes hidden error and heresy, and illustrates the task of theology as an academic discipline. Biblicism is incapable of giving us the doctrine of the Trinity or exposing trinitarian heresies.

Indeed, the doctrine of the Trinity reveals God as the true living God. Bavinck plies this affirmation against the two common foes we have already noted: “Deism creates a vast gulf between God and his creatures, cancels out their mutual relatedness, reduces God to an abstract entity, a pure being, to mere monotonous and uniform existence.” As such, “It satisfies neither the mind nor the heart and is therefore the death of religion.” As for pantheism, it “equates [God] with the created world, erases the boundary line between the Creator and the creature, robs God of any being or life

of his own, thus totally undermining religion.” In contrast to both of these false conceptions of God, Bavinck states the importance of knowing God as the *triune* God: “the Christian doctrine of the Trinity makes God known as essentially distinct from the world, *yet having a blessed life of his own*. God is the plenitude of life, an ‘ocean of being.’ He is ‘without offspring’ (ἀγονος). He is the absolute Being, the eternal One, who is and was and is to come, and in that way the ever-living and ever-productive One” (331 *italics added*).

Bavinck’s exposition of the doctrine of creation is a model of honoring Scripture in all of its affirmations, while humbly (but not uncritically) listening to the claims of modern science pertaining to the origins of the world and human beings. Bavinck shows himself to have been well read and up-to-speed with the consensus position of the scientific community of his day. He neither turned a deaf ear to what that community had to say nor did he compromise the authority and priority of the biblical narrative and its claims. Bavinck explains that we must distinguish between “facts” and “the exegesis of facts.” This is the hinge. What is more, Scripture does not allow us to compromise the unity of the human race. This too is a hinge. For Scripture powerfully confirms the unity of the human race, and finally this biblical affirmation is “not a matter of indifference, as is sometimes claimed, but on the contrary of the utmost importance: it is the presupposition of religion and morality. The solidarity of the human race, original sin, the atonement in Christ, the universality of the kingdom of God, the catholicity of the church, and the love of neighbor—these all are grounded in the unity of humankind” (526).

Readers will discover in Bavinck the kind of hard work theologians today need to do relative to the updated scientific claims and consensus hypotheses of our own era. Contemporary theologians, with Bavinck, must not only accurately state modern scientific positions, they must assess the data which the scientific community puts forward as undergirding those positions. Given the authority and priority of the biblical narrative, facts are ever subject to interpretation in view of that narrative, even as the narrative itself must be interpreted. Christian theologians are still called to expose the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the narrative of naturalism in light of the narrative of creation.

One final observation is perhaps in order in reviewing this work. This volume (and so the four volumes together) has an obvious weakness for a contemporary audience, this is, for an

audience that reads this book for more than historical curiosity. That weakness of course is its dated character as an early twentieth-century theological work. Naturally, this counts as no fault against Bavinck. Inasmuch as the currents of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theology are still with us, repackaged in a variety of newer forms and nuances, Bavinck's exposition is altogether up-to-date. However, for those reading Bavinck as a textbook, seeking to learn Reformed theology and grow in an understanding of the Scriptures, as well as an understanding of the history of doctrine and the Reformed confessional heritage, they should remember that the theological enterprise has moved forward since Bavinck's day. With the rise of Barth's project, and the subsequent reactions to Barth, and given other contemporary currents in theology, Bavinck's dogmatics leaves certain trends of theology unaddressed. Moreover, for students of theology laboring within a North American setting with its diverse ecclesiastical landscape, Bavinck's labor does not always focus directly on matters of immediate interest to that context. Obviously, in using this volume as a textbook, students will need to supplement it with other sources (if only to a small degree).

That said, this work remains a marvelous theological triumph. Bavinck displays a remarkable reach of learning and command of the history of Christian thought. He pursues the theological task in dialogue with the church fathers, the more pivotal theologians in the history of doctrine, as well as with his own theological tradition as delineated through the centuries and with theology in its modern, post-Enlightenment manifestation. Bavinck, while writing a *Reformed* dogmatics, isn't parochial or ecclesiastically provincial. He does not dodge the hard questions; and in trying to answer them he is neither bombastic nor falsely humble; neither smugly *avant-garde* nor fearfully traditional. Rather, his dogmatic work breathes a spirit of conviction and confidence, without the marks of pride and arrogance. For that reason, Bavinck's work is never shrill but labors to be fair in evaluating the positions of others—friend or foe.

—J. Mark Beach

Joel R. Beeke, *Overcoming the World: Grace to Win the Daily Battle*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2005. Pp. 208, including indexes. ISBN 0-87552-746-9. \$12.99.

Worldliness is destroying the church of Jesus Christ, insists Dr. Joel Beeke (Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary), who is president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, where he also serves as professor of systematic theology and homiletics. We need to expose worldliness, and to defend the alternatives of genuine piety and holiness.

Back in 2002, the author presented four addresses to the Metropolitan Tabernacle School of Theology in London. This volume contains an enlargement of these materials. The first address, a sermon on 1 John 5:4-5, presented here as chapters 1-3, seeks to show how worldliness can be overcome only by living faith in Jesus Christ. The second London address examined John Calvin's view of piety as a positive, biblical answer to worldliness, fills chapters 4-7. The third address calls us to cultivate holiness (chapters 8-12), while the final presentation (chapters 13-22) explains how ministers and other church leaders can overcome worldliness. Much of the material in the second and third addressed had appeared elsewhere.

Two elements in this slender volume should attract readers. The first is Beeke's suggestion, in describing worldliness as "human nature without God" (p. 16), that overcoming worldliness does not require us to deny our humanness or to worship it, but to seek its growth and refinement according to the image of Jesus Christ. For our own humanity to be refined, purified, and perfected, we must acknowledge that not everything in the world can be sanctified in service to Christ, so that self-denial and self-discipline belong to the contest against worldliness.

The second valuable element is the author's discussion of worldliness in the context of the gospel ministry. In addition to reviewing biblical exhortations regarding private holiness, diligence in prayer, and guarding one's family, this final nine-chapter section includes a most useful chapter on coping with criticism. Here is where ministers experience so much discouragement, and need so much biblical encouragement.

This clearly written paperback deserves our commendation, especially because its analysis and admonitions are so timely, and

because it brings into view realities that are so fundamental to Christian living.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

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Four and a half hours of tutorial videos help the beginner get started with BW. The videos lead the user through the basic and advanced features of the program. In addition to the videos, BW comes with detailed on-line help and a detailed 400-page manual.

The program can be fully customized, from screen arrangement to font size to default Bible version. The beginner mode uses boxes and buttons to guide the search each step of the way, while the standard mode and power user mode allow the user to construct instant queries using easily learned code. Here are two simple examples of a command-line search. The formula (`/grac*`

faith\*).5(/law\* work\*) will locate a form of “grac...” OR “faith...” AND a form of “law...” OR “work...” within five verses (379 hits in 0.44 seconds). The formula  $\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma =_{\text{gen}} *5 \epsilon\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  will locate every passage where the word  $\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  is followed by a form of the word  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$  within five words, where the two words agree in gender, case, and number (yielding 10 hits in 0.03 seconds). The printed manual illustrates the powerfully complex advanced search engine (a graphical interface allowing the user to draw the query) with the Granville Sharp rule (article + noun +  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  + noun), yielding a result of 81 verses in 1.56 seconds.

Various keyboards (English, Hebrew, and Greek, among others) allow the user to compose queries and notes. Multiple versions can be displayed simultaneously in any preferred order. Bible timelines (able to be edited), maps, and outlines supply study and teaching aids.

Two specific classroom uses (among so many potential uses) have made BW such a useful tool. Mark Futato’s *Basic Hebrew* includes *audio* files that assist the learner in hearing while reading the Hebrew language—a welcome advantage for self-study, review, and lifelong practice! In teaching an elective on reading the Septuagint, I used BW to compose vocabulary lists for the students, lists that contained every word in Genesis 45-50 that appears fewer than ten times in the New Testament. Thus, any student who has mastered Metzger’s or Brandon Scott’s New Testament word lists can read the LXX quite easily with the help of these BW-generated vocabulary lists.

Anyone who purchases computer software on the basis of a published review should know that the software’s true potential is unleashed by *playing* with the program. This takes time, of course. Every computer user has likely purchased a powerful program most of whose features go unused due to lack of familiarity. Happily, BW has generated a helpful group of loyal users who post their tips and tweaks on forums and Internet discussion groups. The company’s excellent support service will itself allay any fears of getting stuck—help is a phone call or an email away. The BW website provides news about the software, free technical support resources, program updates, and contact information.

In any student’s digitized library, *BibleWorks* will easily become a most indispensable tool for many years.

— Nelson D. Kloosterman



Craig L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 251. ISBN 0-8010-2749-7. \$16.99.

With this volume on preaching Jesus' parables, Craig Blomberg offers a demonstration of how his earlier book, *Interpreting the Parables* (IVP, 1990), applies to the pulpit ministry. Indeed, this is what makes this book an intriguing study in its own right, illustrating how scholarship can play out in the homiletical arena.

Blomberg begins this essentially *sermonic* work with a tidy introduction covering, in short form, the history of parable interpretation, followed by a synopsis of his own approach to treating the parables, an evaluation of other recent works on Jesus' parables, and a summary of the principles that ought to guide interpretation of the parables. The format of the book is both interesting and unique. Each chapter (fifteen in total) commences with a sermon by the author on a given parable, followed by his own short commentary on the sermon, explaining why he did what he did, how his sermon connects with his exegesis, and what he is trying to accomplish in each sermon in light of the North American setting or context in which the audience lives and struggles to live the Christian life.

Blomberg's basic approach to the parables of Jesus is that there is *one main point per main character* in the parables, simultaneously seeking to avoid the allegorizing that is a constant temptation in interpreting the parables. The selection of parables here treated serves to illustrate the different sorts of parables found in the Gospels. Given his earlier book on the parables, Blomberg only briefly treats the different types of parables in this volume.

Besides offering an approach to interpreting the parables of Jesus, Blomberg's book, containing as it does some fifteen sermons on Jesus' parables, cannot avoid employing a certain homiletical method. Blomberg is committed to expository preaching, largely agreeing with Haddon Robinson's advocacy of the *central theme* or *big idea* concept derived from a preaching text, that being drawn from historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, and then applied to preacher and to his hearers. Blomberg, however, supplements Robinson's view with the work of W. Kaiser and G. Fee, and also expresses a great deal of sympathy for narrative preaching.

In examining this sampling of sermons on the parables of Jesus I was surprised that Blomberg spends little time actually expositing the selected parable for his hearers. This is not to say that Blomberg has not carefully reflected on the passage and made cogent exegetical decisions—his comments following each sermon makes clear that he has done this work, while he also labors to make pastorally sensitive judgments about the audience to whom he is addressing the sermon. Nonetheless, my ears and eyes wish to be directed back to the text of the Bible both more overtly and more often than Blomberg typically does, and so some readers of this volume might be mildly disappointed by Blomberg's chosen homiletic strategy. In my judgment, the hearers of sermons have a right to see how the preacher derives his sermon from the text of Scripture and how exposition and application is tethered to the Bible—yes, to its very words and phrases.

Having said that, I also feel obliged to remark that the strength of Blomberg's sermonic method is in its extensive and sustained application. The reader or listener of these sermons is not subjected to a boring exposition that proves to be nothing more than a running commentary on words and phrases. On the contrary, Blomberg's sermons breathe applicatory exposition, challenging the audience to live and believe—that is, to put into practice—what is being taught in the parable. Blomberg's sermons are anything but harmless!

For preachers who find themselves composing their own sermons on Jesus' parables, I would not recommend copying Blomberg's sermons or homiletic method, but I do recommend that preachers read his sermons, along with his commentary about them, in order to inform their own work and to awaken ideas concerning how the parables of Jesus find application in the lives of Christians today.

May more biblical scholars be as bold as Blomberg, to actually write a book of this type, venturing to bring biblical scholarship to a homiletic payoff. May there also be an audience demanding more such works.

—J. Mark Beach

Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 288. ISBN 0-8010-2720-9. \$29.99 (cloth).

Hans Boersma, who recently assumed the J. I. Packer Chair of Theology at Regent College, takes up a rather daunting task in this volume on the atonement. As the title of his study suggests, Boersma aims to provide a comprehensive and contemporary restatement of Christ's work of atonement. By utilizing the full range of emphases that have characterized the Christian theological tradition, Boersma seeks to address some of the common criticisms of the Reformed doctrine of atonement in particular. These criticisms include the charge that the Reformed doctrine of atonement is guilty of "complicity with violence," because of its emphasis upon sovereign predestination, the "retributive character" of Christ's substitutionary work, and the "iron logic of Calvinist theological systems" (p. 9). Though Boersma does not wish to abandon the Reformed understanding of Christ's work of atonement, he does endeavor to modify some of these traditional features of the Reformed view. His primary thesis is that such a reformulated doctrine of the atonement, which employs aspects of each of the three principal atonement theories in Christian tradition (classic, satisfaction, and moral-influence), can show how the gospel exhibits both the Triune God's hospitality toward sinners and the way that hospitality has what Boersma terms a "cruciform face."

Boersma divides his study into three parts. The first part, which consists of three chapters, addresses what he terms the "divine face of hospitality." In this part of his study, Boersma makes the case for an approach to the atonement that views it as an expression of God's hospitality toward us. The work of atonement is a work of reconciliation in which God invites sinners into renewed communion and fellowship with himself. In the course of his exposition of God's hospitality toward his people in Christ, Boersma criticizes the Reformed doctrine of "double predestination" as a view in which "the violence of God's hidden will came to overshadow the hospitality of his revealed will" (p. 18). In Boersma's approach, election should be viewed as that which undergirds God's covenant in history, a covenant that exhibits God's "preferential hospitality" for a people through whom he intends to embrace all the nations. The second part of Boersma's study consists of a careful study of each of the three principal

atonement theories in the history of Christian theology. Boersma considers each of these theories in turn, and asks to what extent they contribute to an understanding of the divine hospitality that lies at the heart of Christ's work of atonement. The third part of Boersma's study addresses the implications of his modified atonement view for the "public face of hospitality." In the two chapters in this part of the volume, Boersma argues that the church should be construed as a "community of hospitality," while recognizing that the call of hospitality demands the pursuit of public justice and liberation in human life beyond the boundaries of the church.

Readers of Boersma's study will find that he ranges over a considerable body of historical and theological material on the doctrine of the atonement. They will also likely find themselves engaged and provoked by some of his emphases and claims. Certainly, Boersma's insistence that we view the atonement within the overarching context of the triune God's hospitality toward sinners has much to commend it. It is not difficult to construe the biblical story of creation, fall, and redemption from the vantage point of this theme, with the atonement through Christ at its center. Those who hold to a traditional Reformed understanding of the atonement will also be pleased with some aspects of Boersma's defense of elements of the satisfaction view. Boersma does not deny, but affirms to some extent, the representative work of Christ upon the cross as a work that satisfies the demands of God's justice.

However, Boersma's modifications of several features of historic Reformed theology are not convincing. This can be illustrated in two respects: his caricature of the traditional Reformed view of predestination; and his eager embracing of the so-called "new perspective on Paul." Though Boersma seems to embrace wholeheartedly a number of common criticisms of the doctrine of predestination, he does not seriously engage the Reformed exegetical and theological tradition on the question. Assumptions (or, perhaps, caricatures) about the traditional view are simply asserted. For example, Boersma asserts that an emphasis upon the decrees of God is inimical to a proper emphasis upon the realization of God's purposes of hospitality in history. This raises a rather obvious, but unsettling question: how does Boersma propose to account for history without an appeal to God's eternal purposes or decrees, unless he believes history occurs *ex nihilo*? Throughout Boersma's study, various critical assertions are made about the

doctrine of predestination, but little exegetical or theological argument is offered to substantiate them. Similarly, when he considers the traditional Reformed understanding of the atonement, Boersma tips his hat in favor of the “new perspective on Paul,” and criticizes the older view for its “juridicizing,” “individualizing,” and “de-historicizing” tendencies. Boersma’s use of these terms to describe the older view has a certain rhetorical appeal, but it lacks credibility, since he does not make a case for the “new perspective” other than to observe that it is new. The reader will not be encouraged to take seriously Boersma’s criticisms of the older Reformed covenant theology, when he observes the limited grasp he has of the subject and the way he misrepresents its conception of the prelapsarian “covenant of works” (see, e.g., p. 165).

Because of the importance of his subject and the extent to which his modifications of Reformed theology represent popular tendencies in theology today, Boersma’s study deserves careful assessment. That it achieves its purpose, namely, to provide an improved and updated version of the older Reformed view of the atonement, seems doubtful.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Heinrich Bullinger, *The Decades of Heinrich Bullinger*. 4 vols. in 2. Ed. Thomas Harding, with new introductions by George Ella and Joel R. Beeke. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, reprint, 2004 (1849-52). Pp. cxxviii + 436; viii + 432; v + 408; xxxi + 595 + selected bibliography by George Ella. ISBN 1-892777-38-X \$110.00.

In the language of David Steinmetz, Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli and Reformer of the Swiss church in Zürich, is one of a number of “Reformers in the wings.” Traditional accounts of the Reformation tend to focus almost exclusively upon the contributions of major figures like Luther and Calvin, while the role of less well-known Reformers like Bullinger is inadequately acknowledged and appreciated. In the case of Bullinger, however, a growing body of secondary literature suggests that this language may understate his importance to the Reformation of the church in the sixteenth century.

Among the volumes on Bullinger that were published in 2004, which is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the year of his birth, one of the more significant is this reprint of an English translation of Bullinger’s most important theological work, *The Decades*. English

speakers owe Reformation Heritage Books and its editors a debt of gratitude for once again making this massive work available. These two volumes are a photolithographed copy of an older Parker Society edition of Bullinger's *Decades*, which was originally published in four separate volumes in the middle of the nineteenth century. The only changes or additions to the earlier edition are the inclusion of two introductory essays by George Ella and Joel R. Beeke, and the affixing of a selected bibliography at the end of the second volume.

The publication again in English of Bullinger's *Decades* is particularly important in view of the significance of this work for a study of Bullinger's theology. Though Bullinger's *Decades* do not exhibit the kind of systematic form that is reflected in John Calvin's *Institutes*, they do constitute the most substantial statement of Bullinger's theology. Bullinger's *Decades* consist of five books of ten sermons each, which were originally presented as extended sermons to pastors of the Swiss Reformed church in the vicinity of Zürich at their gatherings or *Prophezei* for the study and exposition of Scripture. The sermons that comprise the *Decades* present the whole sum of Christian theology in the form of pastoral expositions on Scriptural topics or subjects. Though now largely unknown to many Reformed believers, Bullinger's *Decades* were translated into many different languages and widely distributed as a kind of lay dogmatics among Reformed believers throughout Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The popularity and wide influence of Bullinger's *Decades* is illustrated by the title of its German translation, *Hausbuch* (lit., "Housebook"). With the reprinting of these volumes, English speaking Christians have the opportunity once again to benefit from Bullinger's pastoral theology.

Two features of this reprinting deserve comment. The first feature is the inclusion of the introductory essays of Ella and Beeke. These essays provide the reader with a helpful survey of Bullinger's life and influence, as well as some of his distinctive theological emphases. Readers should beware, however, the temptation to rely too much upon these essays, or allow them to prejudice a direct reading of Bullinger's *Decades*. This is particularly true in respect to the essay of Ella, who offers some controversial (and in my opinion, doubtful) opinions regarding Bullinger's differences with Calvin. If readers wish to know more about Bullinger's life and work, other sources should also be consulted. The second feature is that these versions are only reprints of an earlier and, in some respects,

outdated translation. Without in any way diminishing the great contribution of the reprinting of these volumes, English speakers still must wait for a future, newly translated and edited, version of Bullinger's *Decades* in modern English. Happily, the likelihood of such a translation has increased with the preparation for publication of a modern, critical edition of the original Latin *Decades*, edited by Peter Opitz.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Lester De Koster, *Light for the City: Calvin's Preaching, Source of Life and Liberty*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. Pp. xx + 159. ISBN 0-8028-2780-2 \$20.00.

This short study of Calvin's life and influence belongs to a genre of its own. De Koster provides an impressionistic portrait of the work of the Genevan Reformer, which is written neither in the style of a traditional biography or a theological analysis of Calvin's principal writings. Those who are interested in a traditional study of Calvin's life or theology will not find what they are looking for in this work. De Koster's study, though it does offer bits and pieces of Calvin's life and theology, aims to leave the reader with one overwhelming impression: Calvin was a figure of extraordinary influence in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries, principally by means of his preaching. According to De Koster, Calvin's influence upon the life and liberty of Western civilization since the sixteenth century was advanced primarily by the preaching of the Word of God, which is "linguistically embodied" in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The aim of De Koster's portrait of Calvin is to remind the contemporary church that the way of building the City of God on earth is through the official preaching of the Word of God. Nothing more is needed. Nothing less is demanded.

Despite the colorful and stimulating style in which De Koster presents his portrait of Calvin, this little study is of limited value. A perusal of the select bibliography will show that De Koster's study is not informed by recent studies of Calvin. Many readers will likely remain skeptical of the larger-than-life figure of Calvin that De Koster sketches. It is one thing to ascribe a great deal of importance to Calvin's life and work; it is another thing to represent him as a veritable colossus upon whose broad shoulders rests the earthly

prospects for the coming of the kingdom of God. De Koster's study succumbs to the latter temptation.

—Cornelis P. Venema

John H. Dobson, *Learn Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd edition, with audio CD. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005; Carlisle, Great Britain: Piquant Editions Ltd, 2005. Pp. 392. ISBN 1-903689-25-2. \$19.79 (cloth). Mark D. Futato, *Beginning Biblical Hebrew*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2003. Pp. 351. ISBN 1-57506-022-1. Price unknown (cloth).

The last two decades have seen the publication of a number of Biblical Hebrew grammars, and one wonders if many teachers of Hebrew believe that their particular approach is the best one possible, and that their approach needs to be published for the benefit of others. The same can be said in the realm of textbooks that teach Biblical Greek. These remarks are not a disparagement of the appearance of more Biblical language grammars, although it now becomes more difficult to sort through the classroom textbooks available and discover what works best for the teacher and students alike. Approaches range from the deductive, to the inductive, and to various blends thereof.

John H. Dobson has had language teaching experience on several continents, including Africa (Uganda and Kenya) and Asia (Pakistan). He is also the author of a textbook (in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) on Biblical Greek. His approach represents the growing attention toward the inductive approach in which sounds and sentences are learned first so that students become more familiar with language patterns and their becoming ingrained, rather than the mere memorization of paradigms. A very helpful feature of Dobson's textbook is the inclusion of a CD so that students can listen to Hebrew read (even sung!) as they follow along in their textbook. Obviously this is an important dimension to learning any language, including learning that is designed only on *reading* texts. While very few Hebrew students will ever have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a Hebrew language environment (let alone the environment of ancient *Biblical Hebrew!*), Dobson is right to so strongly stress the involvement of the ears as well as the eyes in learning biblical Hebrew. The CD helps students to hear the vocabulary, and thus they are not left wondering whether they are pronouncing the words correctly. A student needs this kind of



psychological boost in the early days of studying Hebrew in order to acquire the confidence to keep building on the grammar learned earlier. Thus, with the aid of the CD-ROM, in addition to learning the alphabet, the vowel points, and some basic syllables, students are strengthened in their language study in the knowledge that they are “saying it right” as well.

Dobson lays out his material in 25 lessons. He provides a helpful “Glossary of Grammatical Terms,” a brief glance at what the Masoretic Text is, and paradigm charts for verbs, nouns, etc. Dobson includes a Scripture index for passages used in his grammar, and there is an index for selected Hebrew words. A helpful addition is his material on translating Hebrew poetry, a subject not always adequately addressed in many standard introductions.

Mark Futato has taught Biblical Hebrew at Westminster Theological Seminary (California) and Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando), thus bringing to bear many years of classroom experience to his text. His larger size textbook also tends, like that of Dobson, toward the inductive method in its approach, although it lacks the assistance that the audio component provides (as evident with Dobson’s CD). Whereas Dobson teaches the alphabet in bite size portions, Futato presents the entire alphabet in the first lesson, the vowel points in the second, etc. Futato, like Dobson, has drills with syllables as well as requirements for memorization to enable the student to build his knowledge of Hebrew. Whereas Dobson completes his survey in 25 lessons, Futato covers the field in 40 lessons, again making the packages smaller and more manageable. His grammar concludes with paradigms of verbs, selected vocabulary lists, and the answers to his practice drills.

One strength of both grammars is that they consciously build upon previous material studied through review before moving on to new material. The Futato textbook explains several elements of grammar, includes a short list of frequent vocabulary words, and then concludes with an assignment section he entitles “Practice.” In the “Practice” section Futato includes exercises that deal with both the new material and review of previous material, and then reading from the Hebrew Bible. As is true in all language acquisition, repeated review is necessary, and this is a strength in the Futato work. The Dobson textbook, on the other hand, often lacks any assignment material for work outside of class, other than what a teacher might give to the students.

Both textbooks put the student into actual verses from the Hebrew Bible as soon as this is possible, thus helping the student to gain increased confidence that the Hebrew language can be understood and that, yes, the Biblical text can actually be read—and that by a young student.

One advantage that the Futato text has over the Dobson volume is the larger format it uses. The pages of Futato's text are free of clutter and uncrowded in appearance, unlike the appearance of the Dobson text. Since some students are initially intimidated by a consonants and vowel points of the Hebrew language, these being so foreign to their own language, a busy or crowded page can be an added obstacle. Futato's book is to be commended for its nice arrangement of text and materials.

A very minor criticism is the transliteration of the  $\eta$  in the Futato text. The use of *ch-* strikes this reviewer as somewhat of a throwback to an earlier convention of transliteration, and it is easily confused in the early stages of learning with the English consonants *ch-* which have a much different sound.

Both of these texts are welcomed additions to the burgeoning publications of Hebrew grammars, however, and demonstrate that students learn Hebrew in different ways and at varying speeds. One approach may fit one learning style better than another. But nothing substitutes for constant drill and frequent reading, and more reading, as students attempt to master the biblical languages. These two texts will help the instructor and the serious student to do just that.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

John H. Dobson, *Learn New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed., with audio CD-ROM. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. 384. ISBN 0-8010-3106-0. \$29.99 (cloth).

*Learn New Testament Greek* was field tested in African classrooms with students who speak English as a second language. It has met a niche for introductory Greek texts and has already been translated into Portuguese, Korean, Czech, French and Indonesian. It seeks to bring students into contact with the text of the New Testament as soon and as extensively as possible without burdening them with grammatical terminology.

In comparison with some of the more popular introductions to New Testament Greek, Dobson's text is quite accessible to the self-

taught student. There are extensive translation exercises with the answers on the right side of the page (which makes checking one's progress a simple matter). There are progress tests with answers in the back. And this edition includes a CD with extensive helps.

Dobson attempts to make learning New Testament Greek as "humane" as possible (a term used by a reviewer of his companion volume, *Learn Biblical Hebrew*). He goes out of his way to avoid complicated discussions of grammar and seeks to imbue confidence and even pleasure at every turn. Teachers are to "measure their forward progress in smiles per hour."

But is it possible to avoid perspiration while learning Greek? I don't think even Dobson accomplishes this. He does helpfully break down the learning process into manageable pieces. And he has much pedagogically helpful material (e.g., stick figures illustrating the use of prepositions in the early chapters and an extensive discussion of cases and prepositions toward the end). But there is no avoiding the memorizing of vocabulary and forms, even here. Ah for a computer chip to insert a new language into the brain (as this year's crop of Mid-America Reformed Seminary Summer Greek students lamented)!

Dobson's book is an attempt to make learning Greek as inductive as possible (versus the deductive approach of traditional grammars). He does helpfully immerse the reader in the language right away. And those who are afraid of grammar may find some consolation here. But for a person of more systematic bent, it may be frustrating that he delays so long introducing basic grammatical terminology and distinctions. The student wrestles through the use of aorist versus present participles before being given these words to describe the differences. Basic discussions of gender and of tense/voice/mood in verbs are delayed extraordinarily long. (A small side point is that he uses the British nominative/accusative/genitive/dative order when he does present cases vs. the American nom./gen./dat./acc. order.)

This is not a text I would recommend for an incoming class of ministerial students (especially with a number of widely appreciated texts available and J. Gresham Machen's classic *New Testament Greek For Beginners* just re-issued in a nicely revised edition). Dobson goes far beyond even most modern language textbooks in his avoidance of a deductive and descriptive approach to the material. I think this could slow down the seminarian's quest to acquire fluency and accuracy in reading the New Testament text. And it is notable that

Dobson cannot avoid introducing his own system of markers to describe certain aspects of the verb. But for a person learning on their own, or intimidated by grammar, or looking for a tasty introduction, it may fit the bill nicely.

—Charles K. Telfer

Peter Golding, *Covenant Theology: The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition*. Geanies House, Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor imprint by Christian Focus Publications, 2004. Pp. 236. ISBN 1-85792-923-3. \$17.99.

The doctrine of the covenant has, off and on, been the source of heated debate within Reformed theology, usually in connection with the status of infants in relation to the covenant and the import of their baptism. The doctrine of the covenant of redemption (also called the counsel of peace, or *pactum salutis*) has also been the focal point of debate. In back of that the doctrine of the twofold covenant, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, which is the hallmark of federal theology, has likewise come under attack from time to time, both from without and within the Reformed tradition. In that light, Peter Golding's book on covenant theology ought to be welcomed by all, whether opponent or proponent of this theology, in that it serves as a useful introduction to the movement that came to be called *federal theology*, and also in its aim to evaluate some of the criticisms targeted against that theology by more recent writers and their corrective proposals to it.

This book, it should be noted, is not a strict historical study. In other words, it is not aiming at an objective historical, contextualized analysis of the federal movement. Nor is the book primarily an analysis of the major theologians from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who elaborated the doctrine of the covenant, and whose labors gave birth to a fully developed federal theology. One looks in vain, for example, for a comprehensive or even an extended analysis of the contributions of Ursinus or Olevianus to covenant theology (even by way of the secondary literature) or of the major continental Reformed theologians who first expounded the doctrine. Even writers like S. Rutherford, William Perkins, and William Ames are given short shrift. Instead, Golding is more interested in laying out contemporary criticisms directed against federal theology (within a limited range) and engaging newer summary expositions that aim to correct or

improve upon that tradition. As such, this book does not introduce the reader to the impetus of the federal movement, nor does it grasp the cohesive character of this theology as a whole.

But rather than fault this book for what it does not do, in fairness to the author we ought to give consideration to what he does aim to achieve. After a brief introduction, the book's first chapter commences by sketching out the origins of the covenant idea in the church fathers and early Reformed writers. Missing is an examination of the doctrine of the covenant as it found expression in the late scholastic period, immediately predating the Reformation, which actually serves as the precursor for the development of the doctrine. In any case, the Reformed writers Golding briefly treats here are (in this order) J. Cocceius, U. Zwingli, H. Bullinger, J. Calvin, Z. Ursinus, C. Olevianus, Wm. Tyndale, J. Bradford, R. Rollock, with an excursus addressing the question whether covenant theology is Calvinian or Melanchthonian in origin. Throughout this chapter Golding leans heavily upon secondary sources in describing the respective authors, and, unfortunately, sometimes these sources are of an inferior quality. For example, Cocceius's treatment of the covenant is discussed without mention of W. van Asselt's insightful and groundbreaking book on this pivotal theologian; similarly, Olevianus's views are presented without consideration of L. Bierma's book on Olevianus's doctrine of the covenant. Both of these authors point us back to the primary sources, and both fruitfully interact with the secondary literature surrounding federal theology. Examples demonstrating this kind of failure in Golding's book could be multiplied.

Golding's over dependence upon inferior secondary literature continues in the next chapter, which treats the "Golden Age" of covenant theology as it was developed in the seventeenth century. Golding begins, once more, with Johannes Cocceius (1603-69), and again the author demonstrates no firsthand knowledge of Cocceius's writings. If Golding had knowledge of van Asselt's work, if not of Cocceius himself, his summary remarks regarding this remarkable thinker would have been far more helpful to the reader and far more accurate and true to Cocceius himself. Golding repeats the error of pitting Cocceius's "biblical theology" against the "scholastic" systems of theology then current. Golding is apparently unaware that Cocceius wrote his own dogmatic theology, employing scholastic methodology with scholastic distinctions. Golding also seems unfamiliar with the range of scholarship on sixteenth- and

seventeenth-century theology as such. The work of Richard A. Muller, Willem J. van Asselt, Eef Dekker, and others has demonstrated that it is false to set up an antipathy between federal theology and scholastic theology as such, even as it is false to suppose an antipathy between Cocceian theology and scholastic theology as such. Arminian theology could ply the doctrine of the covenant and make use of scholastic methodology for its own theological system. These were not categories reserved for Reformed or Lutheran theologians. Unfortunately, Golding depends far too much on outdated scholarship that has long been discredited.

In the remainder of this chapter Golding examines certain English Puritans (including J. Ussher, Wm. Perkins, and Wm. Ames, along with a consideration of such names as J. Preston, T. Blake, J. Ball, and J. Bunyan), Scottish covenant theology (touching on the contributions of D. Dickson, S. Rutherford, and P. Gillespie), the Westminster Standards, and the work of H. Witsius. None of these authors are treated in depth, and, as observed before, there is considerable dependency upon secondary sources in describing the views of each writer rather than a first-hand analysis of their works. With the exception of Cocceius and Witsius (whose views are outlined in all of five pages), Golding does little with the vast contribution of continental theologians to federal theology. This reflects, in part, that Golding is not trying to produce a study in historical theology. It probably also reflects his unfamiliarity with seventeenth-century Reformed theology on the Continent. A positive feature of this chapter, however, is how Golding fruitfully rebuts some of the misconceptions of federal theology as propagated by J. B. Torrance and Perry Miller.

With chapter three Golding examines some of the modern discussions surrounding the covenant concept. The focus is upon the more recent insights of modern scholarship regarding the ancient covenants and the analysis of the Greek word *diatheke* as a translation of the Hebrew word *berith*. Summarizing the synopsis of K. M. Campbell, Golding looks at the covenant idea in ancient societies, which included contracts, parity covenants, covenants of grant, and Suzerainty covenants. Golding is particularly fond of O. Palmer Robertson's definition of a covenant as "a bond in blood sovereignly administered," meaning it is a relationship that involves commitments with life-and-death consequences. Of interest, too, is the choice of the word *diatheke* to translate *berith* in the LXX, when

*suntheke* was an available option. Golding rightly maintains that whereas *suntheke* had more the connotation of an agreement between equal parties arrived at by negotiation, *diatheke* is a word that basically means “a disposition for oneself,” and so could have the sense of a “statute” or an “ordinance,” and the specialized sense of “last will” or “testament.” The latter word was much better suited to describe the covenant between God and humans than the former term, something reflected in the New Testament as well.

With chapter four Golding’s book arrives at its principal interest, namely, to set forth an improved and modernized federal theology for today. In this chapter, which evaluates three varying conceptions of the import of the covenant idea—that of “mutual compact,” that of “divine grant,” and that of “testamentary disposition,” Golding essentially reproduces John Murray’s critique of classic federal theology as presented in his booklet *The Covenant of Grace* (Tyndale, 1954). The mutual compact view is representative of Reformed theologians in the seventeenth century, and nineteenth-century writers such as Charles Hodge. This view proves inadequate, according to Golding *via* Murray, for it falsely conceives of covenant as a contract and fails to capture the idea of covenant as a divine grant. This second view, championed by Murray, argues that the covenant of grace is more like a one-sided grant than a two-sided pact. Finally Golding maintains that the covenant of grace, specifically in the New Testament, takes on the signification of a testamentary disposition. While there is much to appreciate in this chapter, Golding’s over-dependence upon Murray and the misrepresentation of seventeenth-century Reformed theologians, as if they were unaware of the varied nuance of the meaning of *berith* and its import, is regrettable in the extreme.

Chapters five through seven, which treat sequentially the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and successive dispensations of the covenant of grace, interact increasingly with more recent Reformed authors, depending less and less on the bigger and more fulsome expressions of this theology in older writers. The chief burden of chapter five, which treats the covenant of works, is to expound this doctrine and to defend its legitimacy. Golding therefore sets forth the different sorts of criticisms that this doctrine has received at the hands of non-Reformed and critical scholars and also at the hands of conservative proponents within the Reformed tradition itself. Golding argues in favor of the biblical nature and propriety of this covenant, maintaining that what is of

principal concern in this argument is not whether the word *berith* appears in the Genesis garden narrative but whether the *reality* of the covenant is present. Golding argues that the reality of the covenant is indeed present, and he sets forth in support of this idea a number of well-known arguments. This chapter also includes a useful excursus on the covenant of works in Calvin's theology—a much debated point in the literature.

The sixth chapter on the covenant of grace follows the same format and strategy as its predecessor, except here Golding exhibits a bit more interest in the exposition of this doctrine by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theologians (heavily leaning once more upon John Murray, and once more, apparently, unaware of superior secondary sources that examine this aspect of Reformed theology). Be that as it may, Golding also summarizes some features of C. Hodge's discussion of this doctrine, and uses L. Berkhof for a discussion of what came to be called "the dual-aspect of the covenant." From here Golding next treats the sacraments of the covenant of grace, followed by an analysis of what is meant by conditionality in this covenant, which is one of the better features of Golding's presentation, and this is followed by an brief treatment of the covenant of redemption.

Golding's presentation of these matters, while showing itself to be accurate, is not particularly detailed, and one gets little sense of how the doctrine was biblically defended and how it was integrated with Christology and the doctrine of the atonement.

In chapter seven, which treats the distinctive dispensations of the covenant of grace, Golding serves up large doses of John Murray, Donald Macleod, K. M. Campbell, O. Palmer Robertson, and Mark Karlberg. One looks in vain for the name of Francis Roberts or Petrus van Mastricht, both of whom (among others) set forth massive expositions of this feature of covenant theology. This is simply to say that Golding's book has not really plumbed the depths of the federal theological tradition or, for that matter, alerted the reader that such depths exist to be explored. Perhaps the problem, in part, is that Golding seems unfamiliar with the numerous doctoral dissertations that have been written in the last fifteen to twenty years treating various covenant theologians, and/or perhaps he has not spent time in the primary sources as such. In either case, this weakens his book inasmuch as it purports to be an exposition of covenant theology, which according to the book's subtitled, is "The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought



and Tradition.” Given that, I want the best of that tradition set forth, not merely the views of recent authors from that tradition. In fairness to the author, however, this chapter remains an interesting discussion of this important subject.

The final chapter of Golding’s book takes up two matters: an appraisal and assessment of recent studies of covenant theology; and then a statement of the abiding value and contemporary relevance of covenant theology. Under the first heading Golding examines the criticisms against the federal movement by John Murray and his corrective proposals—noting both the strengths and weaknesses of Murray’s assessment, finally faulting Murray for an inadequate conception and definition of covenant. Golding likewise examines, in summary form, the contributions of Meredith Kline, Thomas Edward McComiskey, William J. Dumbrell, and finally O. Palmer Robertson to a doctrine of the covenant—with the views of the last mentioned author receiving Golding’s positive assessment and endorsement. Golding himself is convinced of the abiding relevance and importance of the doctrine of the covenant for Reformed theology, and therefore he offers a number of summary statements in support of it.

Despite my numerous criticisms of this book and my genuine disappointment regarding its weak historical orientation, it still receives my commendation for several reasons: (1) It fills a niche *pro nunc* inasmuch as there is no other book available that introduces, by way of a summary analysis, the various features of federal theology; (2) Golding alerts the reader, especially the reader coming to this material as a novice, to the kinds of criticisms and discussion that surrounds federal theology—although Golding’s presentation in this regard is not exhaustive, and much remains unsaid, it is a serviceable introduction; and (3) this book aims to defend covenant theology as it came to maturity within the Reformed tradition (an aim I share); and no doubt Golding’s book is bound to create further interest in a sometimes neglected and often misunderstood feature of Reformed theology in its development.

—J. Mark Beach

Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi, eds. *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504-1575*. Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought, ed. Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 300, including select bibliography and index. ISBN 0-8010-2899-X. \$34.99.

The publication of this volume coincides with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the year of Heinrich Bullinger's birth. Though several commemorative volumes on the contributions of Bullinger to the sixteenth century Reformation in the Rhineland were published in connection with this anniversary, this volume represents the most important secondary work to be published in English.

Students of the Reformation have typically thought of Bullinger only as "Zwingli's successor," not as a figure of first rank among the magisterial Reformers of the sixteenth century. To use a phrase of David Steinmetz, Bullinger was among those "Reformers in the wings" who made significant contributions in the period of the Reformation, but whose life and theology are usually kept in the shadows when compared to larger-than-life figures such as Luther or Calvin. Though Bullinger's contributions to the Reformed churches in the sixteenth century equaled those of Calvin in many respects (as the author of the Second Helvetic Confession, for example), he has not received the attention that he deserves.

With the publication of this volume, however, students of the Reformation no longer have an excuse not to become acquainted with Bullinger and the extraordinary reach of his reformatory labor. The volume is the "first fruit of a formal agreement of cooperation, signed in 2001, between the St. Andrews Reformation Studies Institute and the Institut für Schweizerische Reformationgeschichte in Zurich" (p. 11). The essays that comprise this study are written by recognized scholars and range widely over the full compass of Bullinger's diverse contributions to the Reformation. After a fine introductory essay by Bruce Gordon, which provides a comprehensive sketch of Bullinger's life and theological work, the study is divided into two major parts: the first deals with a number of aspects of Bullinger's theology, spirituality and ecclesiology; the second addresses aspects of Bullinger's humanism, politics and family. The strength of the volume lies in the rich and complex portrait that it provides of Bullinger's life, and the general introduction that the respective essays give to the present state of Bullinger studies. One particularly important essay

by Edward E. Dowey on the structure and thematic emphases of Bullinger's theology ("Heinrich Bullinger as Theologian: Thematic, Comprehensive, and Schematic") was posthumously edited and published. The volume also includes a fine, selected bibliography of secondary sources on Bullinger.

This volume is highly recommended as perhaps the most important English introduction to Bullinger and the state of Bullinger studies. It should prove to be something of a point of departure for Bullinger studies for years to come.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Trevor Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth: Toward a Reading of His Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999. Pp. xii + 196. ISBN 0-8308-1564-3. Republished, Wipf & Stock, 2005. ISBN 1597520659. \$24.00.

For those who have never had much of an opportunity to delve into the theology of Karl Barth, but wish to do so, and would like a guide in this task, Trevor Hart's book, *Regarding Karl Barth*, is a top choice. This book easily qualifies as one of the best short introductions to Barth's thought under key topics. In this way it serves as a valuable supplement to another excellent introduction to Barth's theology, namely George Hunsinger's, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford, 1991).

In eight well-crafted chapters Hart, professor of divinity at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, explores eight pivotal doctrines of Barth's gigantic theological project: Scripture and revelation; proclamation as divine and human reality; the doctrine of justification; the moral field of Barth's Ethics; the doctrine of the Trinity in perichoretic perspective; truth and pluralism; the Barth-Brunner Debate; and God-talk, that is, the problem of religious language for God.

Whereas the aforementioned book by Hunsinger excels at introducing readers of Barth to the motifs that characterize and shape his work, as well as the philosophical suppositions that undergird much of Barth's thinking, and how all of this applies to certain topics of his theology, Hart's volume stands out by treating pivotal features of Barth's theology in dialogue with other theologians, such as Hans Küng, George Lindbeck, Sally McFague, and Jürgen Moltmann. This is not a critical examination of the

theology of Barth; rather, it aims to give the reader an accurate introduction to Barth's work in dialogue with other theologians.

Among the growing number of new publications that investigate the nature, meaning, and significance of Barth's theology, Hart's volume deserves a place at the top of the list.

—J. Mark Beach

Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James, III, eds., *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical & Practice Perspectives. Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004. Pp. 495, including bibliography and indexes. ISBN 0- 8308-2689-0. \$29.00.

This substantial volume of essays by a wide range of leading evangelical and Reformed scholars focuses upon the doctrine of the atonement. Written as a *festschrift* to honor the extraordinary contributions of Roger Nicole to evangelical theology, the editors of the volume chose the subject of the atoning work of Christ because of its importance in Nicole's theological writings. They also chose to focus upon the subject of the cross of Christ because the theme of the atonement, particularly when it is understood as an act of substitutionary propitiation for the sins of his people, has been relatively neglected in more recent theology.

The essays in this volume are organized under three general headings. After a brief tribute to Roger Nicole by Timothy George and a general introduction by Frank A. James III, the first part of the book consists of ten essays by biblical scholars on distinct portions of the biblical canon. Each of these essays treats the particular themes and features of the doctrine of the atonement that are emphasized in various parts of the Scriptures. The second part of the book consists of eight essays on the atonement in Christian history, beginning with the preaching of Augustine and ending with an examination of the atonement in the context of postmodernity. The last and, lamentably, briefest part of the volume consists of two essays on the atonement in the life of the Christian and the church. Enhancing the value of the volume are a fine postscript on penal substitution by Roger Nicole himself, and a select bibliography of sources on the doctrine of the atonement. Nicole's postscript is a wonderful capstone to the volume, as it illustrates his characteristically sharp and concise handling of difficult theological topics. Nicole's essay offers, for example, an incisive critique of

McLeod Campbell's "vicarious repentance" doctrine of the atonement, which has attracted some interest in recent years.

Unlike some books in its *genre*, this volume manages both to pay fitting tribute to its honoree and to offer a rich contribution to the theological topic it addresses. Indeed, since the publication of John R. W. Stott's volume on *The Cross of Christ*, this may be the best book on the doctrine of Christ's work of atonement that reflects an evangelical and Reformed viewpoint. As with any such collection, some essays are more valuable than others. But, at the risk of slighting other excellent contributions, I would judge that contributions like those of D. A. Carson ("Atonement in Romans 3:21-26") and Richard Gaffin ("Atonement in the Pauline Corpus") are "worth the price of the book." Highly recommended.

—Cornelis P. Venema

E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), Pp. ix + 617. ISBN: 0-300-10765-X. \$22.00 (Cloth, \$37.50).

Inevitability. That is the sense one has in the presence of a great work of art. Beethoven's Seventh Symphony (Wagner called it "the apotheosis of the dance") suggests to its listeners that every note is just as it should be and could not be otherwise. One may have the same sense with a Milton poem or Shakespeare's *King Lear*. There is something of this notion of inevitability in a great sermon, I dangerously tell my students. The response to an excellent sermon often runs along these lines, "Of course, this is the exposition of the text and, of course, this, its application." Rarely with scholarly works does one have this same sense: that this or that book is exactly what it should be and could scarcely be anything else. Sometimes accompanying this sense of inevitability one also thinks, "Surely, this book has been written before, because what it says is so basic, profound, clear, and necessary that it must have been done before." These are the sentiments that gripped me as I read, and marveled at, E. Brook Holifield's triumph, *Theology in America*, which is, of course, not to say that the work is flawless—something of this length scarcely could be. But it is something not done before that has very much needed to be done. So even with its shortcomings, it seems inevitable (of course this is the story of theology in America

in these years) and familiar (hasn't someone written about such an important topic before?).

Even as a great masterwork seems effortless when performed by a master, like Joan Sutherland tossing off a Rossini aria, so Holifield's book coheres, flows, and tells a breathtaking story with seeming effortless. The sense that this book must have been written before, this narrative of theology in America (not of folk religion, civil religion, etc.) evokes several past masters. One thinks of pioneering Perry Miller but then realizes that Miller's massive *New England Mind* does not enjoy the breadth, clarity, or accuracy of Holifield's work. Perhaps it is Sydney Ahlstrom and his great work, *Religious History of the American People* that we call to mind. But that work, too, falls short of this one. Holifield himself contrasts them: "More than forty years ago, my graduate school mentor [at Yale University], Sydney Ahlstrom, surveyed the history of Christian theology in America from the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century in about a hundred pages of subtle interpretation. My book has a more restricted temporal range, from about 1636 to around 1865, but it expands considerably the scope, drawing mainly from 282 North American writers who represented more than twenty-five movements, traditions and schools of thought. Like Ahlstrom, I underscore the trans-Atlantic context, but in my emphasis on evidential Christianity, rationality, practicality, ethics, denominations, persistent Calvinism, and the distinction between populist and academic theologians, I go in different directions from those Ahlstrom traveled" (p. viii). This quote serves well not only to contrast the two great works but also provides a brief summary of the entirety of Holifield's project. Holifield weaves together a masterful tale in which he recapitulates these themes (the seven topics that follow the words, "my emphasis on," immediately above) and their variations time and again.

Nothing like this has ever been done before. Holifield takes denominations and the churches in them very seriously, a rare occurrence among mainstream historians. To be sure, so have great denominational histories, like E. T. Thompson's massive three-volume *Presbyterians in the South*. But this is so much more than a denominational history. It is, among other things, a grand demonstration that evidential Christianity, often under the rubric of Scottish Common Sense Realism, was widespread, along with a commitment to rationality and practicality. Whatever separated Alexander Campbell from Charles Hodge in substance, both of

them were committed, from their own perspectives, to an evidential Christianity, rationally conceived. The only thing that comes close to this work as a whole is the body of superb work in American Religious History that Mark Noll has done, particularly in his recent work, *America's God: from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, which covers the same time period as Holifield's. But Noll, as fine as his book is (and a great complement to Holifield's), does not give us a history of theology, but one more tuned to the American political currents, especially the nexus between Christianity and republicanism.

To American intellectual historians, a book like this is a godsend. When I came into the field of colonial American intellectual history in the early 1980s, first on an undergraduate fellowship and then in a graduate program, intellectual historians were looked on as odd by many other historians—akin to the way intelligent design advocates are looked on by secular evolutionists. The “action” then was not in the field of intellectual history, which was viewed suspiciously as an elitist pursuit of ideas, theology, philosophy, etc, stuff found in books and sermons that did not really impact the oppressed under-classes. It was instead the quantitative historians, the historical archaeologists, the material culturalists, and those of that ilk, who reigned and they were interested in “the structures of everyday life” (as the *Annales* school put it), not theology and sermonizing, which they blithely dismissed as mere rationalizations of the power-elite for keeping the downtrodden masses in their places by promising them “pie in the sky in the sweet bye-and-bye,” thus masking their present miserable lives.

What dominated the field in those days was the New Left social history that was methodologically, and sometimes ideologically, Marxist. One need not take intellectual history seriously, these Marxists argued, because reality is material and economic and all the concerns of intellectual history are but reflections of the justification of the ruling classes of their power positions. There are still plenty of these “we must deconstruct bourgeoisie theology and philosophy” types around, yet a new day has dawned that once again recognizes that ideas have consequences (so much of radical Islam confirms this; its practitioners are often not impoverished and oppressed proletariats but middle class or higher) and it is not the case that ideas, even theological ones, are but a reflection or a

consequence of own one's power position but reflect commitments to be studied in their own right.

And study them, Holifield does. This is a book, finally, that takes theology on its own terms, treats it with respect, and seeks to understand its concerns and convictions. Looking at the period from the Puritans of the 1630s through the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865), Holifield takes seriously the theological heritage of America and examines it with a thorough, yet succinct approach. He has the distinct gift of summing up a great deal of material in a short space, with adroitness, insight, and a gentle, understated good humor. He is jargon-free and scintillating in his prose. What Holifield finds in his survey of theology in America is that during this period, before the rise of Darwinism, higher criticism, and liberalism/modernism, on these shores Calvinism was dominant, and most theologians were defending, modifying, or rejecting it—none could it ignore, however.

To be sure, Bruce Kucklick criticizes Holifield for not letting us know his real evaluation of all these varying theological movements and not tipping his hand as to his own faith commitment. But, as another reviewer noted, “given the current postmodern preoccupation with locating the inquirer within the inquiry, Holifield is remarkable for his methodological modesty.” Holifield seems content, in a measure, accurately to portray all the theological systems, even one like Mormonism, and let the reader make his own assessments. This may not be the approach that many of us would take but it is refreshing not to be bombarded with so much politically-correct whining about the horrors of the Neanderthal theology of our forbears.

Surprisingly, Holifield finds a widespread commitment to the Bible, even where we might not expect it, among Unitarians who saw themselves as restoring pre-conciliar Christianity, and among Restorationists, from whom we would expect it, who rejected all creeds but Christ and His word. We tend to think of liberals or cultists as rejecting the Word of God, but that is not the case formally: they embraced the Word of God *as they understood it*; what they rejected were the creeds of the church. And many of the twenty-five different movements that he addresses (which includes various denominations), disparate as they were, were nonetheless committed to a Baconian empirical epistemology, usually mediated by Scottish Common Sense Realism and manifesting itself in a tendency to rationally expound and defend the faith. Reacting over



against this perceived rational empiricism of a Charles Hodge, for instance, one finds the “communal reason” of a John Nevin and the Mercersburg Theology.

Holifield’s book is in three parts: “Calvinist Origins,” “The Baconian Style,” and “Alternatives to Baconian Reason.” These three parts correspond, respectively, to the varieties of Calvinism that developed here; to the various rejections of Calvinism represented by Unitarianism, Deism, the cults, etc.; and, finally, to the churches and groups that took a less rationalistic and more mystical or even traditional/creedal approach. It should also be noted that Holifield’s categorizing of the groups as he does is debatable but not without its heuristic value. In the first section, as one would well expect, Jonathan Edwards receives extended treatment (44 pages), along with Hodge, who gets half this amount, which is far more than Hodge has usually received at the hands of historians. More noteworthy than Holifield’s serious treatment of theologians is his serious treatment of their theology. What a pleasure it is in these pages to find that Holifield takes seriously theological issues like the imputation of Adam’s sin and the governmental theory of the atonement. The reason that it is important for the historian to take these issues, and a host of others, e.g., imputation, justification, regeneration, and predestination (all of which receive many pages of treatment), seriously is because Americans, even the “man in the street,” took them seriously. I remember being warned in the research that I was doing on the Ashley/Edwards controversy that their theological concerns had little to do with what interested the common folk sitting around the kitchen table. Holifield’s work helps us to see that the gap was not as great as imagined and that what interested the theologian was also of some interest to the laity.

Holifield’s work deals with “academic theology” in a way that makes it plain that the ordinary church-goer was interested in what the theologians were saying and writing. Many reviewers express surprise at this, especially at Holifield’s assertion that, contra its critics who regarded Calvinism as speculative, “Calvinism insisted it was eminently practical” (p. 11). The teaching, even among Calvinists, that theology must be practical and that doctrine must be unto life ties together Holifield’s concern for ethics and the relationship between, as he puts it, “populist and academic theologians.” Of course, that most of these theologians, as Holifield demonstrates time and again, were also pastors and not simply

academicians, may go a long way in explaining how in earlier times the gap was bridged between the theologian in his study and the person in the pew. It is quite important to realize that most of the serious theology, written before the Civil War, was done by men who were pastor/theologians.

One might wonder whether this insistence on “practicality” damaged Calvinism, leading it ultimately to pragmatism, or was its glory, keeping faith and practice together. Perhaps the answer is, “both.” Indeed orthodoxy is useless without orthopraxy but the heart of Christianity is never about what we, in the first instance, do, but about what God in Christ has done for us. An emphasis on doctrine without life leads to a cold, sterile, intellectualistic and rationalistic Christianity. Conversely, emphasizing that “Christianity is a life more than (or worse, instead of) a doctrine” leads to liberalism and auto-soteriology.

Even though Calvinists, as Holifield ably demonstrates in his first section, set the theological plate for America, it was modified not only (in a measure) by Edwards but much more so by his New Divinity followers, like Bellamy and Hopkins, and more radically still by the host of modifiers who followed in the New England theology and the New Haven theology. It is quite remarkable that all of these claimed Edwards, alongside of Finney and the Oberlin theology, as well as New and Old School Presbyterianism. While many of us would argue that, whatever departures there may have been, Old Princeton most faithfully embodied Edwards’s theology, certainly Holifield lays it all out in a way that the reader can judge for himself what has become a cottage industry, the attempt to answer these questions: Was Edwards himself essentially faithful to Calvinism and how faithful to his teaching were his widely differing followers?

That Edwards is the common denominator for so many who otherwise vary radically continues to be a source of fascination in the history of theology in America. It should be noted, Holifield is careful to style this work as he does—a history of theology in America—and not as a history of American theology because he does not see theology here as distinctive from earlier European theology. Surely it remains orthodox longer, not falling prey to Kant and Hegel as early as the continent and England. Thus, Holifield’s volume is testament to the European character and connectedness of theology done here, in contradistinction to one of his reviewers who sees the work as a kind of “theological Declaration of

Independence . . . a comprehensive account of American theology as an indigenous intellectual tradition.” The book is, to be sure, a comprehensive account of something that had not been told before. It is not, however, a survey of “American theology as an indigenous intellectual tradition” as if what went on here was peculiar to here. What was peculiar to here, I believe, was how seriously and for how long many Americans took their theology. But it was a theology, certainly in its Calvinistic forms, that was of a piece with the earlier Reformed theology of Europe, particularly as reflected in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century confessions of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The Enlightenment was slower in effecting the content of theology here (though it did effect the method) and we see that in Holifield’s account.

This volume comes the closest of any that I have seen of subtly and, perhaps even, inadvertently, explaining the great—and to the orthodox, perplexing and distressing—shift in American theology from Calvinism in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to Arminianism, Unitarianism and Deism all within the next century. Holifield explores the fascinating connections between these and the possible causes of this shift from Calvinism to Unitarianism at the beginning of his second section. It would appear from Holifield’s recounting of the shift, that the Calvinism of colonial America contained within itself some of the seeds of its own destruction, being epistemologically committed to evidence and reason in a way that ultimately had the effect of undermining a proper foundationalism, i.e., one based on what modern Van Tilians would see as the true foundation, the ontological Trinity and the self-attesting Christ of Scriptures. The Baconian empirical approach, Holifield makes clear in this second section, allowed man to be the judge in a way that, when many stopped bowing the knee to Christ as King, rapidly gave way to a whole host of autonomous rebels. Even as the rebellion of the 1960s came only after the alleged autonomy of earlier decades, the Unitarianism of the 1820s, in the work, e.g., of William Ellery Channing, came only after persons had been for decades invited to examine the evidence and give a rational response.

The Calvinists, as represented in Holifield’s first section, had lots of stuff right in terms of content. This is because the Reformers and the Reformed confessions did indeed go *ad fontes* and developed, in particular, the clearest expression of soteriology in the church thus far, based on the whole counsel of God. They were,

arguably, however, lacking in terms of method, being too wedded to an epistemological approach that was not sufficiently and self-consciously biblical, which awaited later, more explicit development in Kuyper, Van Til, and others, particularly after the problems with pretended neutrality and the like became evident. Those represented in Holifield's second section on the Baconian style have the same method in many respects as their Calvinistic predecessors but, looking at the evidence autonomously and applying reason magisterially, yielded a theology not based on God's Word, even though professing to be. Those in Holifield's second section, in other words, began to change the content of theology, though keeping the same method until such time (after the Civil War and Holifield's purview) as the method itself was changed (from rationalism to irrationalism) and all gave way.

Whether one calls the aftermath of the shift of methodology represented in the first and second sections post-modernism or modernism gone to seed does not matter. That is a story that, strictly speaking, would be the next volume if Holifield were to write such. Those in Holifield's third section reject the rationalistic/evidentialistic method but keep some of the content, unlike the post-modernists who follow. Here in the third section ("Alternatives to Baconian Reason") Holifield cites an interesting range of responses from Lutheranism and Catholicism to Transcendentalism, Horace Bushnell, and the Mercersburg Theology. While the commitment to tradition means that Catholicism, along with Lutheranism and the Mercersburg men, will retain much orthodox content, methodologically even these will reduce often to mysticism, existentialism, and irrationalism, not a hearty biblical presuppositionalism that provides a solid rock, as opposed to a shifting sand, foundation for all knowledge. Thus what we await, as this volume shows, is the confessional, creedal, Protestant heritage, which is the most faithful to the Bible that we have, set even more firmly upon a solidly biblical/exegetical foundation.

Never to this extent, as in this work of Holifield, has it been shown that theology in America was caught between Parmenides and Heraclitus, between Plato and Aristotle, at least to those who have eyes to see it. The Princetonians were, in many respects, the best of the lot, though they too had a few epistemological problems, failing to recognize the degree to which humans in their rebellion do not engage in right reason and twist the truth that they suppress

to their own wicked end. The history of the world since then has in a number of ways made that more evident than it was to our forbears who did not recognize some of the bad aspects of the Enlightenment (there were, we should be clear, good aspects as well, just as of the Renaissance). The answer to the rationalistic tendencies of the Princetonians may seem to have been that given by Schaff and Nevin at Mercersburg. But Mercersburg tended, arguably, to mysticism and irrationalism.

The greatest thinkers of the church, and I put Edwards among them, were foundationalist, not in the Cartesian sense, but in the sense of affirming the centrality of faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*), albeit imperfectly and inconsistently. A more robust Christian epistemology awaited a fuller biblical grounding in Vos, Van Til, and others. Holifield's excellent work makes clear to the orthodox that the Reformation got soteriology right, even as the earlier church did in terms of theology proper, anthropology and Christology. What the church still lacked is seen partly in the epistemic whiplash from modernism to post-modernism that this volume anticipates. Now we must continue to work on a distinctly Christian epistemology not so as to yield a New Perspective on Paul, the Reformers were quite right in their reading of the great apostle, but to provide an even more solid foundation to the faith once for all delivered to the saints as reflected in our Reformed confessional standards. Holifield gives us a clear lay of the land up to the Civil War. We need the same kind of historical work done from that point to this so that we can more clearly understand where we've been and where we need to go with theology in America.

—Alan D. Strange

I. Howard Marshall, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 136, including indexes. ISBN 0-8010-2775-6. \$13.99.

For evangelicals, some issues simply won't go away. The expanding fissure in the evangelical consensus on matters of doctrine and life is generating another round of discussion about the possibilities of using Scripture to justify what are essentially contradictory conclusions.

These essays were the author's Hayward Lectures given at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and are

combined in this volume with responses from Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Stanley E. Porter. This work belongs to a series entitled *Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology*, monographs which offer critical assessments of major issues facing the church in the twenty-first century.

This book wrestles with the scholarly impasse regarding issues such as the place of women in marriage and the church, which leads the author to ask: Is there a principled way of moving from the ancient text of Scripture to its modern application in the church? Can we discern this route from Scripture itself?

The book's three chapters map out the arena where the impasse is most keenly felt, namely, in theology, ecclesiology, and ethics.

Current discussions about hermeneutics among evangelicals operate on three levels: general hermeneutics, exegesis, and application. During the twentieth century, evangelical interaction with the presuppositions of liberal hermeneutics has yielded some shifts in perspective. First, evangelicals have come to view biblical books as theological documents, so that one of the main aims of interpretation is to draw out a document's theology. Second, evangelicals increasingly recognize Bible books as literary entities—resulting in narrative criticism and discourse analysis displacing source criticism and redaction criticism. Third, we see among evangelicals the rise of canonical criticism, which seeks to understand the function of a Bible book within a larger collection or canon. Each of these developments has been accompanied by the recognition on the part of many (not all) scholars that evangelicals can use the methods of critical study without accepting the anti-supernatural presuppositions, an approach termed “believing criticism” (p. 20).

The 1990 proposal of J. I. Packer (“Understanding the Bible: Evangelical Hermeneutics”) is seen as typical of evangelical hermeneutics, because it emphasized as essential to evangelical exegesis the recognition of authorial intention, the coherence and harmony of biblical revelation, and the progress of revelation within Scripture. This principled approach does not, however, generate identical exegetical outcomes—witness the diversity among evangelicals regarding women's ordination and the supercession or continuation of gifts. Moreover, evangelicals have come to see that this principled approach fails to address modern problems which have no analogy in Scripture. If one starts with Scripture, one will likely never reach those problems whose solutions depend not on a

single passage, but on the thrust or trajectory of Scripture. In addition, this evangelical approach cannot account for Christian opposition against cultural phenomena seemingly endorsed by Scripture (slavery, unrepresentative government). Finally, this hermeneutical approach seems unable to account for the *sensus plenior* of Scripture, being unable to explain, for example, Scripture's own use of typology.

In chapter 2, "The Development of Doctrine," the author begins to sketch his proposal for going beyond the Bible in making doctrinal and ethical applications of biblical truth.

Beginning with ethics, we find in the Bible a number of commands given in a specific situation that no longer exists, or given in a form appropriate to a specific situation that no longer exists. We in the West do not greet with a kiss; modern Christians no longer endorse slavery, and universally abhor genocide. Many evangelicals include in this category of commands which have in some sense "passed away" those commands relating to the role of women in the church and the home.

Marshall argues that such relativizations of biblical commands are based not so much on the change of situation and culture, as on a legitimate and necessary development in the understanding of Christian ethics. Ethical development occurs within Scripture itself, developments which seem to enable us to plot a trajectory beyond Scripture as we face modern issues and applications.

With regard to doctrine, all of us do in fact go beyond Scripture in formulating our doctrine. Doctrinal understanding is part of a continuing process of interaction with Scripture. Examples of doctrinal development today include open theism, questioning the primacy of penal substitution in Scripture, infant baptism, the eternal destiny of those who do not hear the gospel, and the nature of Christ's presence at the Lord's Supper. Because these issues involve disagreement among evangelical Christians, we are forced to ask: How can we decide which developments are valid?

Four modern realities intensify our hermeneutical challenges today. First, the developments of science and technology generate new questions. Second, doctrinal formulations are needed to explain various biblical statements and truths, but these formulations necessarily go beyond the Bible. Third, the Bible presents us with metaphors, teachings, and texts that stand in tension with one another. Fourth, conflicts exist between biblical teachings and gospel-sensitized modern minds (e.g., a Christian notion of justice

which forbids the practice of torture conflicts with the belief that God consigns sinners to eternal fire).

What, then, guides us as we go beyond Scripture?

Marshall offers his plan in chapter 3, “The Search for Biblical Principles,” framed as a question: Can the old/new covenant distinction which is so significant for interpretation and application *within the Bible* also serve us as we go *beyond the Bible*? Can the same “move” that was made with OT material in the NT, be made with the NT material in the modern era? One example of precisely this move is the fact that millions of Gentile Christians no longer abide by all the requirements of the apostolic decree of Acts 15, particularly regarding food.

This approach seems especially suitable since now in Jesus’ absence, we must translate his own teachings in terms of the new age that has come. This includes the church’s development of Christology, soteriology, and pneumatology. The events of Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost deeply affect our formulation and application of what Jesus taught in the Gospels. Two examples of transition within the New Testament itself may illustrate this: the shift within the teaching of the early church from “kingdom of God” to “faith in Jesus Christ,” and from discipleship as mode of Christian living to union with Christ as source of Christian living.

Marshall openly asks the obvious question: Does a principle of this kind lead to relativizing parts of biblical teaching? If the tendency (purpose?) in the Pastorals was to restrict leadership to men, then today where false teaching is not the problem it was back then (since now the Scriptures are readily available, a congregation is better educated in the faith, etc.), we need not be bound by the portrait supplied in the Pastorals. Speaking of 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Marshall argues, “Here, I believe, is a passage that certainly was authoritative as a measure to be applied in the difficult situation in the church at that time wherein a constellation of problems required a solution that involved the barring of women from teaching. However, none of the reasons adduced for that solution require that this be a barrier for all times and places, and therefore I do not think that the practical conclusion drawn there is a permanent one” (p. 76).

Developments in doctrine and new understandings after the closing of the canon are inevitable. These must be based on continuity with the faith, and be in accord with “the mind of Christ.” They may relativize some aspect of biblical teaching that



was appropriate for specific occasions and cultural settings or where the gospel itself requires us to do so (p. 79).

The entire discussion receives its concluding summary in seven statements (pp. 78-79). Especially his second formulation ought to be pondered: "There is an incompleteness in Scripture, seen in factors such as the diversity, the occasional nature of the teaching, and the impossibility of dealing with later questions and problems, all of which mean that doctrine can and must develop beyond scriptural statements."

One is left to wonder how this comports with the Reformational (and presumably evangelical) insistence on the *sufficiency* of Scripture as our rule for faith and life. Marshall had reminded us earlier that many evangelical scholars can use the methods of critical study without accepting the anti-supernatural presuppositions. But it is not clear how and why using Marshall's axiom regarding the "incompleteness of Scripture" to relativize certain aspects of biblical teaching differs *in principle* and *in outcome* from the liberal critical program which evangelicals have long criticized. Are the *methods* of historical criticism all that benign after all?

In his response essay, Kevin Vanhoozer supplies an analysis which, because of its clarity and cogency, is worth the price of the book. Vanhoozer focuses on the metaphor embedded in Marshall's title, asking: What, precisely, does it mean to "go beyond" Scripture? His question is ours: Can one go beyond Scripture via the redemptive trajectory approach and at the same time prevent one's own view of the trajectory from lording it over the text? Vanhoozer offers a useful alternative that accounts for moving from Scripture to doctrinal and ethical judgments.

The response essay of Stanley Porter concludes with a proposal to expand the use of the dynamic equivalence theory of translation to theology itself. Once the kernel (namely, the essential, enduring, and pertinent core) of a biblical truth is discerned, it must be placed into the equivalent form of expression in the receptor language (today's theological language) so it has the same effect on the present receiver as it did on the first hearer (p. 126). Porter's expansion of the dynamic equivalence translational theory into a hermeneutical theory signals the need, first, to do our homework on the relationship between the theory (or theories) undergirding the church's traditional practice of Bible translation to the church's formulation of creeds and confessions.

Anyone wanting to remain current with evangelical discussions that seek to understand and explain the fundamental relationship between Scripture and claims made for both doctrine and ethics will find this volume useful.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), Pp. 306 + xiii; ISBN 0-385-50061-0. \$23.95.

Nietzsche famously, in the mouth of the madman, announced that “god is dead” and Wagner, following Nietzsche, even entitled the last opera in his incomparable tetralogy (*Der Ring des Nibelungens*), *Die Gotterdammerung*, *The Twilight of the Gods*. And what Wagner meant by the twilight of the gods and Nietzsche by the twilight of the idols was that gods, idols, and believers were passé. Christianity, in particular, had run its course, and its twilight meant that “its day of influence is passing and its sun is setting” (p. 174). According to Alister McGrath, however, in his work on *The Twilight of Atheism*, the tables have now turned and it is atheism itself, and not belief, whose day of influence is passing and its sun is setting. Atheism that was but such a short time ago in vogue now finds itself, McGrath argues, on the way out, while faith is making a roaring comeback. Rumors of the death of belief have evidently, to put a twist on Twain, been greatly exaggerated.

McGrath begins his book with a survey of the rise of atheism. The beginnings of atheism in the West, which is McGrath’s focus, is not altogether discouraging. Truth be told, the “atheism” that arose in the Classical Greek era was, in some of its features, to be preferred to that which had preceded it. Homer’s world of gods and goddesses, who often appeared as little more than one huge Olympian dysfunctional family, had become an acute embarrassment to thinking Greeks, raising the question, “Who could admire such corrupt divinities or seriously want to imitate the lifestyles they modeled” (p. 8)?

Indeed, the Greek term *atheistos* did not mean “one who denies the existence of supernatural beings,” but something more like “one who denies the traditional religion of the Athenian establishment” (p. 8). This definition, of course, immediately calls to mind Socrates, who was put to death for corrupting the youth of Athens by discouraging belief in the Greek gods, in whom Socrates and his

followers (including Plato and Aristotle) did not believe. This was not atheism then in the sense that it will arise in the aftermath of the Enlightenment. Recall that the Christians during the time of the persecutions were also charged with atheism, because they denied the Greek, and all other, gods, affirming only the true and living God.

It is also true that there was a decided shift in the post-Homeric Greek world from the earlier mythological beliefs to scientific and philosophical ones in the wake of the Milesians (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes) and other pre-Socratics, who sought explanation for the nature of things not by recourse to the gods but by observing the world around them. When man, in other words, turned from seeking a supernatural explanation of things to a naturalistic explanation, he embraced atheism. This moved him, in one respect, closer to the truth, because he was observing God's creation: better to discover the second causes and have a better grasp on general revelation than falsely to speculate about first causes that don't exist. Still, to focus exclusively on second causes with the assumption that such are all that there are is to make the mistake of a secularized science and to fall into an atheism that can sustain no pursuit of knowledge whatsoever.

A secularized science, however, will not come to dominate until the nineteenth century. McGrath's story of atheism, beginning among the classical Greeks, does not pick back up, with any significance, until the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, until the Enlightenment and its aftermath. Let us pause for a moment and realize how utterly remarkable this is. Atheism was not a significant force or factor in the West after the passing of the cynics, skeptics, and others of that ilk among the Greeks and Romans. From the time of Constantine forward, Christianity dominated and we can rightly speak of the West under the rubric, Christendom. Often cited as factors that led to the dissolution of Christendom are the Renaissance and Reformation and particularly the religious wars (especially the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648).

The Reformation sparked a crisis of authority, of sorts. The locus of religious, in fact, according to the claims of the medieval popes, the locus of *all*, authority lay in the Roman church. This kind of overreaching on the part of the Roman church produced a backlash, so that some in the radical Reformation denied any authority to the institutional church. The Church had held itself to be infallible and the Reformers argued that the Scriptures alone

were infallible, the Church relying on the Spirit rightly to read them. This created, for many, a crisis, and they begin to look elsewhere for indubitable knowledge. Rene Descartes played no small role in this quest.

McGrath rightly notes that Descartes, as the father of modern philosophy, lays the foundations for modernity. He seeks a foundation, a starting point, for indubitable knowledge and discovers it, so he thinks, in the thinking self (*cogito, ergo sum*). He was right to recognize that the institutional church itself was not the foundation point, but Descartes failed to realize that that upon which the Church herself was built, the apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief cornerstone, was the proper foundation for all knowledge. McGrath does not himself appreciate this, being, at best, a perspectivalist of sorts (a kind of Christian post-modernist), certainly not a thoroughgoing presuppositionalist. McGrath does recognize, however, that Descartes' conviction that "philosophy alone could establish the necessity and plausibility of the Christian faith" had the unintended effect of undermining belief in God altogether and that the Cartesian revolution contributed to the rise of atheism (pp. 31-32). One might add that the whole project of modern philosophy, seen in its earlier phases in the continental rationalists and the British empiricists, grounding knowledge in something other than the infallible Word, exhibited this tendency. To be sure Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, and others of this group (unlike, say, Hume) did not intend in the slightest to contribute to atheism, but their autonomous anthropocentric approaches could scarcely fail to do otherwise. This brings us to the eighteenth century where McGrath's story picks up with a vengeance.

McGrath locates the high watermark of atheism (he incorrectly calls it the "high noon," which means showdown and defeat) in the French Revolution and much that followed. He is somewhat, perhaps not wrongly, defensive of Voltaire, seeing him not so much a critic of Christianity *per se* but of its corruptions (pp. 24-28). Once the French Revolution institutionalizes atheism, famously enthroning the goddess Reason, the door is opened to an atheistic world that was not then realized but which prompted many to look and hope for such a "brave new world" in the future (pp. 45-47). The French Revolution paved the way, as it were, for the "three giants [who] emerged to lay the intellectual foundations of atheism with a rigor and permanence denied to others. The three great pillars of the golden age of atheism are Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-

72), Karl Marx (1818-83), and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who between them turned a daring revolutionary hypothesis into the established certainty of an age, placing Christianity constantly on the defensive” (p. 47).

These three augured a secular priesthood, signaled by the rise of the intellectual (in the sense that Paul Johnson writes of Intellectuals). McGrath incisively observes: “The emergence of the intellectual as a recognized social type is one of the most remarkable developments of recent centuries. Intellectuals became a secular priesthood, unfettered by the dogmas of the religious past, addressing a growing audience who were becoming increasingly impatient with the moral failures and cultural unsophistication of their clergy. At some point, perhaps one that can never be determined with historical accuracy, Western society came to believe that it should look elsewhere than to its clergy for guidance. Instead, they turned to the intellectuals, who were able to portray their clerical opponents as lazy fools who could do no more than unthinkingly repeat the slogans and nostrums of an increasingly distant past. A new future lay ahead, and society needed brace new thinkers to lead them to its lush Promethean pastures” (p. 49).

One might rightly ask, “How much did any of this ever hold sway with the common man?” Perhaps it does not matter, since it held sway with enough, with those who in every area of life were to become leaders. Surely, this atheism has never been widespread and has had influence out of all proportion to its size, given its appeal to the intellectuals. For some reason, the unbelief that people before the Revolution would speak about only among themselves, privately, now dares to speak its name openly (even as we have seen in the homosexual movement, which once, as Wilde noted, was that which “dared not speak its name”).

Feuerbach argued that God was a human invention, a mere projection or objectification of “human emotions, feelings, and longings,” all of which is but a “longing for immortality and meaning [projected] onto an imaginary transcendent screen, and give[n] the name ‘God’” (p. 57). Marx sees the invention of the idea of God as an opiate, administered by the ruling classes to keep the serving classes in their places by preaching both contentment with one’s lot now and gratification later in heaven. Freud, like Feuerbach, sees religion as an illusion, specifically “a distorted form of an obsessional neurosis. The key elements in all religions, he argues, are the veneration of a father figure (such as God or Jesus

Christ), faith in the power of spirits, and a concern for proper rituals,” all of which can, and needs to be, rooted out by analytical psychotherapy (p. 71). One also witnesses, in the developing sciences, in both the hard and the social sciences, a growing conviction that science itself, as an enterprise, is atheistic, and must, of necessity, be so, concerning itself only with matter and the observable, believing that there is nothing else besides that. We do have a “which came first?” question throughout our consideration of atheism: did atheism lead to unbelieving science (Darwinian evolution, higher criticism, etc.) or vice-versa? The best answer is probably that they sustained a symbiotic relationship and fed each other. At any rate, atheism always involves, at its heart, an attack upon the Word of God, even as it has been since the temptation of our first parents in Eden.

These three (Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud), together with Darwin, Percy Shelley, George Eliot, the Life of Jesus Movement, and a host of other historical concomitants, all added up to the so-called “Victorian Crisis of Faith” (pp. 112ff.) and, even more ominously, “The death of God movement,” that spanned from the early existentialism of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche to the theology of John Robinson and Thomas J. J. Altizer (in the 1960s), including the rise of the Atheist state, particularly in international communism (pp. 165ff.). In reaching these high points, or low points (from a Christian view), we can already see the beginning of rollback, however, and the failure of atheism on so many levels, including what McGrath calls “the imaginative failure of atheism” (pp. 185ff.).

What atheism had promised was liberation from all that oppressed man and held him back—fear of eternal punishment, imposition of rigid morality, obligations to others, etc.; what atheism delivered, particularly in the twentieth century, was untold suffering, destruction, and misery, as well as providing no foundation for being, knowledge, ethics, etc. Inasmuch as the God of the Bible is the absolute, indispensable, necessary pre-condition for the existence and intelligibility of everything, atheism strips man and leaves him without foundation for ontology, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. We have seen this in a century that has reduced man to matter-in-motion, left him in relativism and skepticism, robbed him of any ethical obligations or expectations, and taken away even the comfort of beauty. Again, McGrath fails to appreciate sufficiently that this is where atheism lands us, his critique of atheism being not quite radical enough.

McGrath notes that the ascendancy of atheism continued up until comparatively recent times. Harvey Cox, for instance, assumed that secularism was the future in his 1965, *Secular City*, in which he saw a culture “that had no time for religion” (p. 193). And in 1971, John Lennon’s song, “Imagine,” was a huge hit, beckoning us “to envisage an ideal world, devoid of conflict precisely because it was devoid of religion” (p. 173). Whereas in the election of 1960, everyone was concerned with the question of how religious John Kennedy was, hoping that his Catholicism would not impact his presidency, in the last few presidential elections candidates have taken pains to indicate how religious they are and that their religion plays an important role in their lives. What caused the change? Why has there been, as McGrath puts it, “an unexpected resurgence of religion?” McGrath offers several answers: the intellectual case against God has stalled (belief in God is a matter of faith and not amenable to rational proof or disproof); the denial of God has not decreased suffering and has arguably increased it; atheism has suffered from a failure of imagination and has proven unable in its materialistic explanations to account for all that we know to be true (love, beauty, etc.), leading to a rebirth in the interest of the spiritual and a conviction that such is needed to lead a full life; and a resurgence of interest in the supernatural that has manifested itself in what McGrath calls, “the remarkable case of Pentecostalism” (pp. 192-97).

Of course, this religious resurgence for many only means an interest in Hollywood-style “spirituality,” be it devotion to new-age practices or simply never to missing “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” McGrath misguidedly criticizes Protestantism for contributing to the rise of atheism, seeing it, among other things, as responsible for the divorce of the sacred and the secular (I would say that this happened in medieval culture, actually, in which vocation was viewed as purely religious and every service other than churchly, inferior) as well as being imaginatively impoverished (look at Dutch art if that’s what one thinks, but not in worship). At several points, McGrath faults Protestantism for individualism, doctrinal precisionism, and other things for which it can be, in a measure, faulted (pp. 198-216), yet McGrath fails to appreciate Protestantism’s rich and necessary contributions in these areas. When someone faults Protestantism, as does McGrath on p. 199, for the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it is evident that they have little sympathy with the heart of Protestantism.

Likewise, McGrath is too positive in his assessment of what post-modernism has done for us in its respect of diversity and in its exposing atheism's embarrassing intolerance. Postmodernism is skeptical in its epistemology and the answer to atheistic modernism's dogmatism is not epistemic uncertainty, which McGrath and so many others seem to favor, which is merely a kinder, gentler epistemic relativism. The way forward is not by adopting the undogmatic method of the post-modernists and condemning the doctrine of eternal damnation (p. 275), as McGrath suggests, but by continuing to believe all that God has spoken, summarized in the Reformed creeds and confessions, and of proclaiming that in the churches and to the world. McGrath helpfully traces the rise and fall of dogmatic atheism but fails to see that the antidote to it is not the undogmatic pablum of post-modern Christianity but the reinvigorated proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God that brought about the Reformation and which is as much needed in our day as it was in that day.

McGrath sees atheism's dogmatic arrogance as that which brought it down, even as it earlier brought Christianity down, and he does not want a renewed Christianity to make that mistake. He is right that over-reaching, misinformed and tyrannical church leaders contributed to atheism's rise. Protestantism put the church in its proper place but did not do so by neutering theology, which is just what would happen if we adopt McGrath's approach. McGrath says that it is weakness that will appeal to a post-modern world (pp. 276-79). We are weak and nowhere is our weakness and need more clearly expressed than in the Protestant understanding of the gospel and of justification by faith alone, which, as we have seen, McGrath finds individualistic. But our weakness, which is there because of our sin, does not mean that God has not revealed truth to us and that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are given to understand that truth. McGrath is critical of the possibility of our clearly knowing and confessing the truth, regarding such as arrogance. He wants something more than the people in the church confessing their weakness: he wants the people in the church confessing the weakness of the faith itself, that Christianity itself is not about certainty but about weakness and doubt. We must reject this approach root and branch and instead vigorously and uncompromisingly preach the Word. This is the divine prescription for all unbelief, whether dogmatic atheism or more sophisticated forms of unbelief, even our own struggles with something like the doctrine of



eternal damnation, which McGrath suggests we jettison. Instead, let us whole fast to the whole counsel of God.

—Alan D. Strange

A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*. Includes *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* on CD-ROM. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 349. ISBN 0-8010-2648-2. \$29.99 (cloth).

This is a quality, up-to-date textbook on world missions. The book is divided into five parts: (Part 1) Encountering Missions in the Scriptures, which treats mission in the Old and New Testaments, as well engaging mission theology; (Part 2) Encountering Missions in History, wherein is presented a survey sketch of the history of missions, first examining this history from the premodern era (A.D. 30-1500), then the period of discovery and colonialism (A.D. 1500-1900), and finally the contemporary period, expansion to and from every continent (A.D. 1900-2000); (Part 3) Encountering Missions as a Candidate, which has three chapters, exploring in turn: First Steps, Have You Been Called?; Missionary Preparation; and Charting a Path from Here to There; (Part 4) Encountering Missions as a Sent One and as a Sender, within which personal and family issues are carefully examined, strategic and ministry issues are explored, including separate chapters on relating to people of other cultures and the relation of churches to other shareholders; and (Part 5) Missions Encountering the Contemporary World, which examines several important topics, such as communicating with people of other cultures, mission trends and paradigm shifts, dealing with the religions of the world, and what are mission prospects for the future.

This book is intended first and foremost for prospective missionaries, but anyone who is interested in becoming educated about the complexity of issues surrounding missions to other nations and cultures will find this a valuable text. Those supporting missionaries would do well to read a text like this one in order to support the work of missions more prayerfully and with a better understanding of the joys and hazards of the mission field. What is more, this text proves valuable even for church leaders serving in their own native culture inasmuch as many of the issues that confront missionaries in a foreign culture find parallels to bringing

the gospel to unchurched people in our own secularized North American setting, with the struggle to disciple them.

This is nothing short of a well-executed project from start to finish, and it deserves a wide readership.

—J. Mark Beach

Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520-1725. Vol. 3: The Divine Essence and Attributes*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. Pp. 606. ISBN 0-8010-2294-0. \$44.99 (cloth).

This massive volume, the third in Muller's four-volume work on post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics, treats only a portion of what is commonly called the doctrine of God. Muller here confines his focus to exploring God's essence and attributes (the doctrine of the Trinity is treated in the fourth volume of the set) as this was articulated, expounded, and defended by the major Reformed theologians of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries. This volume, along with the others that fill out this project (volume 1 on prolegomena to theology, and volume 2 on Holy Scripture), is a noteworthy historical-theological achievement, which will define the field for years to come, and blazes a trail along which both theologians and historians of doctrine will travel in the pursuit of responsible scholarship. Pastors, too, will find a lofty theological education awaiting them in Muller's four volumes—especially if they wish to move beyond a basic textbook of Reformed theology on these topics. They will find that this book is a most informative specimen of historical scholarship, uncovering the development of Reformed theology concerning theology proper and that tradition's mature theological analysis and reflection on that locus. As such, this volume also sheds light on modern discussions in philosophical theology, and demonstrates that Protestant theologians of a bygone age have previously examined, within Scriptural limits, some of the more difficult topics that philosophical theologians ponder today. Thus readers of this volume will discover that the philosophical and theological depth of the Reformed tradition resides in the formulations of its seventeenth-century practitioners—formulations that can be recaptured for Reformed theology in its contemporary expression.

The four volumes as a whole (volumes one and two being thoroughly revised and expanded in a second edition) have as their

aim to exposit the theology of the magisterial Reformers and their successors as part of a theological tradition, demonstrating traits of theological development and diversity, as well as traits of uniformity and agreement wherein particular broad exegetical conclusions and dogmatic themes that they regarded as non-negotiable. In short, Muller presents Reformed theology as a multi-textured movement, reflecting continuities and discontinuities within a singular tradition. In his appeal to and mastery of an expansive list of primary sources, Muller makes plain the futility and impossibility of the “Calvin against the Calvinists” thesis. He also dismantles the common misdefinition of scholasticism, characteristic of the older nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical and dogmatic scholarship, along with its wrongheaded “central dogma” approach to Reformed theology.

In treating this locus of theology, Muller does not begin with either Zwingli or Calvin; instead, his study first sketches the doctrine of God from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, which means that theologians like Anselm, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, and Durandus of Sancto Porciano are given consideration. Contrary to the popular notion that Reformed theology emerged *ex nihilo* or “from scratch” as a fresh exposition of Scripture, except for an occasional appeal to the church fathers, Muller sets the Reformation as a theological movement within its own historical context, which inherited, besides the church fathers, the larger Western theological tradition. Indeed, the Reformation may not be divorced from the late medieval situation, and is part of the fabric of that historical development.

Muller’s thesis is set forth under three headings. First, he argues that with respect to the doctrine of God “a strong element of continuity between medieval, Reformation, and post-Reformation theology” is manifest inasmuch as there is “an underlying agreement in the interpretation of numerous key biblical *loci*.” Second, Muller further maintains that the Protestant orthodox were in fundamental agreement with the exegetical tradition of the Reformers, despite the methodological differences that existed between the Reformers and their successors in the degree to which scholastic method was employed. Third, he shows that Protestant scholasticism was not simply a return to medieval scholasticism. “Scholastic method had itself altered and developed during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries—and, what is more,

the Protestant scholastics retained in their theology both an element of the Reformation distrust for philosophical speculation and high degree of concern for the biblical basis of theology.”

Inasmuch as this four-volume project is actually a single monograph, exploring the nature of theology as an academic and practical discipline, its *principia*, the nature of Scripture as the *principium* of theology, with its properties, and the hermeneutical principles that ruled Protestant exegesis in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and presupposed in back of all of that a doctrine of God gleaned from Scripture itself, the third volume of this work demonstrates that *the nature and identity of God* defines the theological task and underlies the doctrine of Scripture. These matters may not be artificially separated, for God himself is the *principium essendi* of theology.

As for the doctrine of God, the Reformed Protestants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries evidence diversity of expression and arrangement of materials, and distinct trajectories of discussion. Their conclusions on this subject certainly were not monolithic. Yet the evidence also lays bare “a high degree of consistency” among Reformed authors. Never was God conceived as “an unrelated deity.” The doctrine of God’s eternity has largely been misappropriated by contemporary Reformed writers and transformed into a doctrine of divine timelessness, “under the terms of which an everlastingly changeless and atemporal being does not relate directly to the temporal order.” This is off-track. Rather than identify God as timeless, it is better to conceive of him as encompassing time. God’s attribute of eternity means that he exists in unchanging duration. Similarly, divine impassibility does not indicate that God is without love or mercy or anger or joy. God has affections, but he is not essentially reactive or in process—as though he were one who learns and changes and becomes more a God that he was before. God is free in his sovereignty—free to create or not to create. Moreover, the doctrine of God never functioned as a first premise from which the rest of theology was to be deduced—not even in reference to soteriology. Rather, the system of Reformed theology, as well as the doctrine of God itself, was formulated in dialogue with all of the other *loci*.

Muller’s work is divided into two parts. Part 1 is introductory in nature, treated in two chapters, and traces the doctrine of God from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, and then from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. This comprises about 150

pages. Part 2 is divided into four chapters that expound upon the Reformed orthodox doctrine of God, treating in succession: the unity of existence, essence, and attributes of God; God's essence, names, and "essential" attributes; the divine attributes of life, intellect, and will; and finally God's attributes relating to the manifestation and exercise of the his will. This second part comprises some 445 pages.

The world of scholarship can only hope that Dr. Muller will continue his project, and venture further in expositing the doctrine of God to include topics such as the divine decrees, predestination, creation, and providence. His general approach to these materials, which involves an exploration of a vast literature, diverse in genre and in geographical variety, serves as a model of the kind of work that could legitimately and profitably be applied to the entire field of Reformation and post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics.

Muller's work is particularly valuable in demonstrating the exegetical dependency of Reformed theology in both its more overt and less overt scholastic representations. He also weaves into his narrative the important philosophical discussions (and assumptions) that are never far from the exposition of the doctrine of God—setting these discussions within their changing historical contexts. This volume, then, with its companions, exposes the mythology of the once dominant consensus of historians and theologians regarding the Reformers and their successors. In place of the myth, Muller offers scholars and pastors alike a richly textured examination of Reformed theology in its early and late codifications. Specifically, he shows that the marks of theological continuity and discontinuity between the Reformers and their heirs cannot be captured under headings of scholasticism or a dogma like the divine decree. The story of the Reformed doctrine of God, in each and all of its codifications, is first and foremost an exegetical story.

Muller's project sets forth an expansive agenda for historians of Reformed doctrine, and serves as a model of the kind of work that can serve the church in its ongoing labor to expound the Scriptures and formulate doctrine. This volume, with those that accompany it, is a landmark achievement and is enthusiastically recommended.

—J. Mark Beach

Richard D. Phillips, *Turning Your World Upside Down: Kingdom Priorities in the Parables of Jesus*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003. Pp. 229. ISBN 0-87552-579-2. \$12.99.

Pastors inevitably find themselves preaching the parables of Jesus, often in some sort of series format. Richard Phillips book on Jesus' parables, subtitled "Kingdom priorities in the parables of Jesus," offers a helpful example of how to treat some of Jesus' parables in a cohesive form. In this case, Phillips examines the parables of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, and follows the parables sequentially as they appear in that Gospel. He treats thirteen parables altogether, starting with the parable of a farming sowing seed (Luke 8:1-18) and concluding with the parable of the wicked tenants (Luke 20:9-19).

Inasmuch as there is no shortage of books that analyze the parables of Jesus, one might ask whether we need another book on this topic. In defense of the author and the publisher, I believe this book deserves a place on the pastor's bookshelf. To be sure, this book is not a sophisticated exegetical analysis of the Lucan parables, nor even an intermediate level commentary on these materials. That is not its aim. Instead, Phillips's book fits into the homiletical genre, which offers something that the more technical commentaries do not provide the pastor or interested lay reader, namely, an expository analysis, based upon the better commentaries, which takes the biblical message first spoken by Jesus to a first-century audience and applies it to our contemporary secularized circumstances, with our ecclesiastical foibles, false theological flight patterns, and hypocrisies.

In reading this book one is confronted therefore with Phillips's own sermons on the parables in the Gospel of Luke. This sort of book benefits pastors by helping them to discover ideas for their own sermon writing on Jesus' parables, both in how to structure such sermons and how to apply them to concrete problems and needs within the church today. It would be asking too much of this book to defend each and all of its exegetical choices (indeed, I do not agree with all of them). But let it be said that Phillips's volume, for the most part, may be trusted as a reliable guide through the parables he examines.

A further benefit of this book is that it may be used for group and individual study, since discussion questions on each parable have been appended—a nifty added feature that adds to its value

and usefulness. Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to mention that Phillips writes with both clarity and simplicity, and peppers his book with useful illustrations from Scripture and the lives of God's people.

—J. Mark Beach

Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission, vol. 1: Jesus and the Twelve, vol. 2: Paul and the Early Church*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004. Pp. 1928, including indexes. ISBN 0-8308-2790-0. \$90.00 (cloth).

In this truly monumental study, Eckhard Schnabel paints for us a breathtakingly detailed picture of the rise and growth of early Christian mission. Precisely this penetrating and comprehensive detail—filling almost 2,000 pages!—makes a review quite challenging. Before long, we will need to replace summary with description, and invite readers to obtain and read for themselves what is sure to become a standard work in the field.

Eckhard Schnabel teaches New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He taught previously at Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines, and at Freien Theologischen Akademie in Giessen, Germany. This study was originally published in 2002 as *Urchristliche Mission*.

The last comprehensive study similar to this one was Adolf von Harnack's classic, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (German, 1902; English, 1904). This new work seeks to integrate "historical-geographical and exegetical-theological material into a comprehensive description of the missionary movement of the first Christians" (p. xxiv). Sifting through Jewish, pagan, and Christian sources, the author examines the first century of the church's missionary activity with painstaking attention to the geographical, religious, and political history of every area and city mentioned as having been reached by the gospel.

The author begins by sketching the missionary impulse of the Old Testament, and follows with a fuller portrait of the mission of Jesus to Gentiles. His masterful work culminates with an exhaustive description of the apostolic missionary activity as it is related in Acts, Paul's letters, and the rest of the New Testament.

Early in the first volume, the author helpfully sets out his answers to questions and issues of method, which include his

definition of “mission” or “missions,” along with a description of his theological and historical approach, and a discussion of his hermeneutical presuppositions regarding the sources.

The author works efficiently in Part I (chapters 4-7) to expose the Old Testament roots of Jesus’ mission, and to examine the interrelationships of both with Second Temple Judaism.

In Part II, readers settle in for a presentation of the historical, economic, religious, and political realities in the Palestine of Jesus’ day. The author then examines Jesus’ mission, directed first to Israel (though not excluding Gentiles), and extended through the mission of the Twelve and of the Seventy-Two.

The book of Acts supplies the palette for Parts III and IV, as the author plies his trade before our eyes slowly (through 1,100 pages) and carefully (with hundreds of footnotes) and competently (demonstrating mastery of primary and secondary literature).

In the closing fifty pages, we are invited to stand back from the portrait and talk about its impact on us today. With benevolent directness Schnabel turns from historical analysis to pastoral exhortation.

The practice of early Christian mission included using both the spoken and the written word (the OT) coupled with deeds, and included deeds of compassion toward people within and outside the church, lives of consistent and enduring integrity in the midst of persecution, and genuine devotion to the message of the gospel in the life of the believers among whom they lived.

After reviewing seventeen factors that many throughout the centuries have identified to account for the success and spread of the early Christian mission, Schnabel selects none of them, but settles for a simple confession of divine providence. In the words of the French patristic scholar Gustave Bardy, “We should not forget the powerful effect of divine grace, which chooses whom it wants, leading them onto those paths that lead to Him” (p. 1561).

The elements of the message proclaimed and taught by the early Christian missionaries are summarized as God’s redemptive messianic revelation, the church’s new identity, and the promise of paradise restored.

Those interested in translating all of this into a contemporary theology of mission will find most engaging the work’s final chapter, “The Early Christian Missionary Movement and Missions in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries.” If we believe that Scripture is the authority for both faith and practice, and if that



practice includes ecclesial practice, then we may fully expect to learn lessons for modern missions from the missions of Jesus and of the apostles. However—and the following warning is capably honored by Schnabel himself—en route to discerning those lessons we must possess the needed historical clarification of the original situation through careful exegesis and hermeneutical reflection.

These two volumes contain numerous pauses for exegetical analysis of relevant texts (which texts, incidentally, are usually printed out in full in English). The reader repeatedly finds engagement, sometimes extensive, with commentators and New Testament scholars whose conclusions the author may refine or set aside.

The author reserves his most intense rhetoric for his discussion of the word βαπτίζοντες in Matthew 28:19, insisting that it is people converted to Jesus Christ who are baptized, and not vice versa. He explicitly rejects the church's practice of infant baptism as that has been defended by a certain Otfried Hofius in a 1994 journal article of some twenty-two pages. Like many others, Schnabel cannot reconcile the efficacy of divine grace given sacramentally in infant baptism with the obvious fact that not every baptized baby later confesses faith in Christ or follows God's will. Regrettably, his limited field of conversation partners, together with his failure at this point to take into account the fullness of biblical teaching regarding baptism, has marred the portrait of early Christian mission.

Two other concerns involve lack of attention to the covenantal nature of the Christian mission (cf. the lawsuit motif found in the Old Testament prophets, which some believe continues in the μαρτυρία of Jesus and of the apostles), and the absence of any sustained discussion regarding the proclamation of coming divine judgment and destruction of the world as an integral component of the missionary message of Jesus and the apostolic church (cf. Matt. 12:36; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 4:17).

One will have a difficult time knowing where to place these volumes in one's library. Should they be in the commentary section? Or in the church history section? New Testament environment is just as logical. But, of course, the missions section is *most* logical. But then again . . . .

Which merely illustrates, again, the scope and meticulousness of *Early Christian Mission*. The author and publisher are to be congratulated for the appearance of this splendid two-volume study.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

David VanDrunen, ed., *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at the Westminster Seminaries; Essays in Honor of Robert B. Strimple* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing Co., 2004). Pp. xiii + 311. ISBN 0-87552-717-5. \$18.99.

This is a deceptive volume because it delivers more than one might expect from such a book. It promises, in its subtitle, to be a survey of theology as practiced at the Westminster Seminaries (WTS in Philadelphia and WSC in Escondido) and to pay tribute to Robert B. Strimple, long-time systematician and administrator at the two seminaries. It meets and exceeds, in my estimation, those two tasks that it sets for itself. The way in which it exceeds those tasks is by critical self-reflection rarely found in “institutional pieces” or *Festschriften*. And because of its broad approach, this volume should prove of value beyond those involved in the two seminaries, containing insights for all interested in theological education and the theological enterprise.

One might expect a volume like this, written by professors in the two institutions, to border on a dressed-up promotion piece for Westminster and perhaps even to be a parochial, in-house encomium for one of its esteemed teachers. Not only is this book not a “puff-piece” for the seminaries, but it is a mature, critical, reflective analysis of Westminster, looking to the past while seeking also to address how they might do a better job in the future. And Dr. Strimple is not canonized but is given a pitch-perfect short tribute by the editor, David VanDrunen (Strimple’s able successor at WSC), while WSC Librarian James Lund furnishes us with a bibliography of his writings and his former colleagues all pay tribute in various ways to this theologian, who truly has been, as sportscaster Howard Cosell used to say, “one of the most underrated.”

The book is divided into four parts: Historical Studies, Systematic Theology among Other Disciplines, Particular Issues in Westminster Systematics, and Westminster Systematic Theology and the Life of the Church. In the first section on historical studies,

there are two essays, the first by the prominent historian and former member of both faculties, D. G. Hart, and the second by the first president of Westminster (PA), Edmund P. Clowney. Clowney's article is a tribute to John Murray as a teacher, churchman, man of piety, etc., arguing that his enduring legacy is both his commitment to the Westminster Standards and his championing of Geerhardus Vos, which advocacy "equipped the seminary to meet radical challenges in contemporary thought and culture . . . because biblical theology takes seriously the history of redemption and [thus] put[s] theology in context" (p. 39).

That this book is not simply a panegyric to the two institutions, however, is evident in the first article in this section, before the Clowney piece, in which Hart engages in critical reflection on the more scientific stance towards theology at Old Princeton. Hart contrasts Princeton's systematic approach with the more biblical-theological and exegetical approach of a Murray and a Van Til, the latter's criticism of Princeton's rationalist/evidentialist methodology having the "perhaps unintended consequence" of calling into question "the whole enterprise of systematic theology as a science" (p. 23). Hart is critical of what he sees as Westminster's desire for originality, over against Old Princeton's glorying in "unoriginality," manifested in Westminster's exaltation of biblical theology over systematic theology, seen in the work of almost all Hart's colleagues at the Seminary. Hart calls for a return to Princeton's idea of systematic theology, noting that "its methods may have produced theological stodginess, but that originality turned out to be remarkably adept at preserving the character and content of Reformed orthodoxy" (p. 26). Clowney celebrates Murray while Hart is critical of Murray and the whole biblical-theological movement. Clearly, to its credit, this is no ordinary "see-no-warts" or "air-no-differences" volume.

It is appropriate, then, that the next section ("Systematic Theology among Other Disciplines") should begin with the longest article of the volume, an essay by WSC theologian/apologist Michael S. Horton. Horton's contribution is something of a history of the rise of biblical theology, which Horton defines as "the attempt to follow the unfolding drama of redemptive revelation in its historical aspect" (p. 44), within the context of Reformed scholasticism (Cocceius, e.g., not being a break from but arising within Reformed scholasticism, pp. 47-48). He demonstrates how in its Enlightenment mode, biblical theology (or in some cases, more

basic exegesis) comes to be embraced and systematic theology rejected, by both liberals and evangelicals, who are either biblicistic, system-rejecting or both, and act as if one could read the Bible “from nowhere” (p. 55).

Horton cites his projected trilogy, which is now at two volumes (see fn. 19 on p. 59) and which develops in far greater depth the kinds of things that he is arguing here about the relationship between biblical and systematic theology. Those multi-volumes are written and argued at a level not accessible to most churchmen, while this essay, setting forth the same kinds of arguments and concerns, is more comprehensible to the interested, educated layperson. Something of the work that he is doing in those volumes is reflected in this essay when he writes: “As with the other false dilemmas, what is required here is a distinctively Christian metaphysics that is suspicious of *speculation*, not *precision*. If all of theology is analogical, the alternative to univocal rationalism need not be equivocal agnosticism. By reintegrating exegesis and system, Christian theology can not only cease being intimidated by the assault on metaphysics (inevitably by engaging in it), but can begin to wean itself from the false metaphysics (caught between Heraclitus and Parmenides) that critics have every reason to deconstruct. Needless to say in the present volume, the approach to theological method taken by Cornelius Van Til, which he inherited from this earlier Reformed orthodoxy, offers a model of how a genuinely Christian metaphysics can challenge the modern and postmodern orthodoxies of our day” (p. 62). There are many paragraphs in this work (particularly following the one just cited) that I am tempted to reproduce—especially as they point to a constructive way forward, with a vigorous, dynamic biblical theology and a faithful and engaging systematic theology. I will rather content myself with urging all who are interested in this most vital of questions, one of the most significant now confronting us, to consult this and the fuller body of Horton’s work.

Next up is John Frame, who now teaches at Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando) but who taught for many years at WTS and then WSC. Frame’s essay is also quite helpful as he surveys the teaching of systematic theology and apologetics over the years at the two Westminster (this is still in the section, Systematic Theology Among Other Disciplines). Perhaps the best part of the essay is Frame’s explication of John Murray’s lectures on Theology proper, particularly his section on epistemology. Van Til customarily

taught this course. Apparently he was on leave in the late 1940s or early 1950s and Murray taught it a time or two, with at least one student taking very detailed notes and mimeographing them for the others. These notes reveal Murray's indebtedness to and agreement with the essentials of Van Tilianism (contra John Gerstner who once opined that Murray may not have agreed with Van Til inasmuch as "old Scots ate up natural theology with their oatmeal," p. 79). Frame takes some time in examining Murray's positions on the knowability and incomprehensibility of God, analogy, revelation, theistic proofs, and the attestation of Scripture (pp. 79-88) and finds agreement with, slight differences from, and perhaps improvement of Van Til.

The last chapter in Part Two is Dennis Johnson's essay, "On Practical Theology as Systematic Theology." Johnson teaches practical theology at WSC and clearly demonstrates that practical theology, as a relatively young discipline, at least as it is now discretely conceived, has an identity crisis and can be tempted to address its identity by embracing one of two "fragmentary approaches": practical theology either as behavioral science or as historical theology (pp. 105-113). The former error tends to reduce practical theology to methods and to damage its theological underpinnings. The latter error tends to reduce practical theology to traditionalism, with the remaining dilemma—what strand of tradition ought we to follow, even within the Reformed faith? Johnson calls for, rather, a practical theology that will serve as the systematic theology of ministry (pp. 113-124).

The rest of the essay is challenging to summarize and so rich as to prompt me simply to commend its being read. Perhaps these sentences will be suggestive of Johnson's direction and whet the appetite for more: "Practical theology in the Reformed tradition has an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate the unity of theory and practice, the harmony of faith-filled conviction and faithful action. The covenantal structure of Scripture keeps us from segregating intellectual and ethical responses to the divine Word. Sovereign grace and its corollary, utter human dependence, forbid trust in ministry techniques. Yet the fact that God extends grace through creaturely means forestalls passivity, and the love that such mercy evokes should move us to serve our Redeemer to the full extent of the gifts, insight, and strength that the Spirit supplies" (p. 122).

The next section, Part Three, treats "Particular Issues in Westminster Systematics," beginning with an essay by Robert

Godfrey, the current president of WSC, on Westminster, justification, and the confessions. Godfrey sets forth clearly the teaching of the Scriptures and the Reformers on the doctrine of justification, noting that subsequently the Pietists, the Methodists, and others compromised the doctrine as well as did Ritschl and Finney. The biblical doctrine is that justification is forensic, though those who teach that justification is also transformative have always threatened because “human nature in its pride wants to contribute and help in its own justification” (p. 148). This article then goes on to examine “the deconstruction of justification in the twentieth century” (p. 131). Godfrey is a remarkably clear and concise writer, and this article is helpful for anyone wanting to get a handle on this doctrine and on the current controversy.

Godfrey examines Barth, Fuller, ecumenical compromises (evangelical and Roman Catholics, Lutheran and Roman Catholics) and the New Perspective on Paul before his more extended treatment on Norman Shepherd (pp. 135-140). He scores Shepherd for a number of errors before wondering out loud how such errors came to be at Westminster in regards to, of all things, something as clear in the Protestant Reformation as the doctrine of justification. He opines that such error arose even at Westminster because of a failure to understand the true nature of confessionalism and thus of adopting a “sympathetic-critical” view toward the standards instead of placing our confidence in them (pp. 141-142). Allied with this, he criticizes the majority of American Presbyterianism for not requiring confessional membership and for allowing exceptions to the confessions on the part of candidates.

These last questions have some complexity that Godfrey’s brief treatment is not capable of addressing and I disagree with his broad-brush dismissal of these practices of American Presbyterianism, about which I intend to write more elsewhere. That demurrer on my part notwithstanding, I believe that Godfrey has a point about Westminster being confessional but not always teaching the Confession: Godfrey concedes that Murray was quite confessional and had a firm knowledge of the standards, but that “he stressed particularly the biblical evidence for Reformed doctrine [so that] some of his students seem to have come away, contrary to his intention, focusing on the Bible but not knowing their confessional heritage as they ought” (p. 139).

This was a problem that I observed at WTS in the mid-eighties. I once heard an able and godly professor assert that he liked to

“shake students up” in their confessionalism and to challenge them to think outside the confessional box, to which some of us (especially a few who had just become covenantal and confessional) replied, “Yes, but many of the students here have never been in the confessional box and were not brought up in this confessionalism.” I believed then, and now, that it is one thing to challenge an ardent confessionalist to articulate a biblical defense for his or her beliefs; it is another to raise questions about or take issue with the confession with someone who has scarcely, if at all, embraced it. I make this point because several of the essays in this volume (at pp. 69, 141, and 227-228) mention John Frame’s surprise at the confessional commitment he witnessed in his transition from being a student at the seminary to a ministerial member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It is true, as John Muether notes in his essay, that Machen, Murray, and others were confessionally committed, though often expressing such under the rubric: “the whole counsel of God.” But I do not think that Frame missed it altogether, because in my experience, the confession was embraced by the faculty (in varying degrees) but not taught with much explicitness or intentionality at the seminary.

R. Scott Clark makes the next contribution in Part Three, with his article on the well-meant offer of the gospel. Clark currently serves as an associate professor of historical and systematic theology at WSC. This article was particularly rewarding, in my estimation, giving the best historical and theological grounding that I have seen in a short piece on the well-meant gospel offer. Clark notes the role of this in the Clark-Van Til debate as well as those in which Herman Hoeksema was involved. His contribution to this is summarized as follows: “This essay contends that the reason the well-meant offer has not been more persuasive is that its critics have not understood or sympathized with the fundamental assumption on which the doctrine of the well-meant offer was premised: the distinction between theology as God knows it (*theologia archetypa*) and theology as it is revealed to and done by us (*theologia ectypa*). In making the biblical case for the claim that God reveals himself as desiring what he has not secretly willed to do, Murray and Strimple assumed this distinction which they did not articulate explicitly” (p. 152). Clark proceeds to articulate explicitly how an understanding of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology illumines the well-meant offer, a doctrine necessary for vital preaching and well-warranted faith.

In his article on human speech as reflecting our being in the image of God, Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., long-time professor of (now) biblical and systematic theology at WTS, argues that we must understand that human speech, given its origin, can truly communicate. If we fail to understand that words can communicate, since we are in the image of him who is the Word, we are likely, as have so many in our age, to come to “a crisis in hermeneutics, an increasing hermeneutical despair” (p. 191). This anti anti-rationalism of Gaffin needs to be heard in this post-modern era, at a time when many are claiming to be faithful to Van Til and construing him as if he were an irrationalist. The Word himself is above reason but not contrary to it. This is a call for the ministerial use of reason, based on the true origin of our language: language is “not an intrinsically inadequate medium for communicating, for conveying meaning. Certainly our language, as we have seen, can confuse, veil, and distort. But this, we must remember, is directly attributable to our sin, our varied misuse and deliberate abuse of language, not to any functional defect in our language itself” (p. 191). Were this not the case, systematic theology would be rendered untenable.

The last article in this section is by the editor and incumbent in the Strimple chair in systematic theology at WSC, David VanDrunen. VanDrunen wades into the waters already stirred up by Hart and Horton, in particular, raising questions about the nexus between biblical and systematic theologies. VanDrunen wonders whether either of the seminaries has ever enjoyed the discipline of *systematic* theology—something possible only if there is a system of theology (p. 196). VanDrunen maintains that there is a system of theology and that it can be properly centered under the idea of the covenant. By employing the covenant idea, VanDrunen believes that biblical and systematic theologies can be properly drawn together, as they should be. In fact, VanDrunen wants a wholly integrated approach, in which, “an exegetically grounded, biblical-theologically energized, historically faithful, and systematically rigorous theology” coalesces (p. 220). It should be noted (pp. 209 ff.) that what VanDrunen means by the covenant idea or by the covenants is not mono-covenantalism but a re-invigoration of classic federalism with its understanding of the covenants of redemption, works, and grace.

The last major section deals with the relationship between the seminaries and the churches, with a particular focus on systematics in this mix. The first article in this section is by John Muether, who



has served as Librarian at WTS and is currently the historian of the OPC. Muether notes how, in the first several decades of the OPC (founded in 1936), WTS functioned as the *de facto* seminary of the OPC, with large percentages of its ministers training there. More recent years have witnessed quite a proliferation of Reformed institutions for the training of ministers: “At the 2003 General Assembly, for example, the ministerial commissioners came from 25 different seminaries or Bible schools” (p. 244). Muether’s article does a good job diagnosing this shift and wondering what the future holds, noting that the Ministerial Training Institute of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (MTIOPC) was founded, at least in part, to remedy the perceived shortcomings in certain areas that the OPC thought further training was needed. There is indication of responsiveness on the part of WTS and WCS not only to the OPC but to the churches more broadly, due perhaps in part to the proliferation of Reformed seminaries and to MTIOPC.

Derke Bergsma, who is now retired from WCS as a professor of practical theology, furnishes us with an article that sounds as if it would be of limited interest and use—“Reflections on Westminster Theology and the Seminary Constituency”—that, in fact, ought to be read by every theological professor, development director, and all interested in theological education. Bergsma sets forth what a seminary is and how it is to be a servant to the church. Along the way, he gives a number of practical suggestions about how the church and seminary might be brought closer together, calling, e.g., for professors not only to take sabbaticals for scholarship but also consider a “leave of absence for ministry.” Bergsma notes that “face-to-face, people-to-people ministry is the perfect antidote for theology divorced from life” (p. 255).

The penultimate article by Jay Adams, former professor in both of the seminaries and pioneer of the modern biblical counseling movement, is vintage Adams. Adams expresses deep appreciation for Dr. Strimple and their years of working together, noting that Strimple was an excellent systematic theologian who made it easy for Adams to teach good preaching, which is, Adams contends, application based on solid exegesis. Adams argues that the work of systematics, topically arranging the fruits of biblical exegesis, furnishes preaching material whereas a certain sort of biblical theology yields “excellent essays,” (p. 263) but not sermons. Adams, in nouthetic fashion, confronts Westminster and calls upon it to restore the balance and return systematics to its proper place

(perhaps before all those Vietnam War era students came who were “avoiding the draft,” p. 266). I agree with Adams that systematics needs to take its place at the Westminster, but not so as to dismiss biblical theology, which has always occupied a prominent place at Westminster. Insofar as Adams senses a lack of something in the preaching at Westminster, that has always, in my estimation, been one of the greatest challenges for both of the seminaries, viz., turning out good preachers—and perhaps for every other seminary, too! I don’t think that the solution, however, is to jettison biblical theology, but to have the kind of integrative theological approach that VanDrunen enunciates earlier (p. 220).

The closing essay of this fine collection is penned by D. Clair Davis. I lament that Davis has not written more, because whenever he writes or speaks, it’s worth hearing, and what one hears is that rare commodity, wisdom. This article is full of wisdom, the kind that only comes from long consideration of one’s subject matter. In this piece, Davis reflects on Westminster Systematics, Spirituality, and the Christian Life. Davis describes, in his inimitable fashion, approaches to spirituality, justification, sanctification, adoption, etc., reaching as far back as the Middle Ages and coming to the near present in discussions surrounding personages such as Jack Miller and Norm Shepherd.

One of the best things about his organic, wise, deeply-pondered, and deliberate approach is how he appreciates the problems that arise in our Christian lives—e.g., assurance of our belonging to Christ—and that these problems do not stem from Reformed theology but from remaining sin and unbelief. So he recognizes that “theological fixes” for pastoral problems come up short. He recognizes that Miller’s shortcomings are being addressed but “that is not yet happening with Shepherd’s,” whose “views have not been placed within the broader context of the biblical gospel . . . [and thus] in isolation . . . seem imbalanced and misleading” (p. 290). He considers in this article, then, many of the kinds of issues that the Federal Vision seeks to address, but does it with a humble, practical Calvinism that is not confusing and that is, in fact, very encouraging.

What has been the genius of the Westminster Seminaries? One might look at a number of its contributions to the theological enterprise and conversation. After all, the biblical theology of Vos discovered a home there and enjoyed rich development by Murray, Gaffin, Strimple, and others. Many would see significant

contributions in the seminal work of Cornelius Van Til in apologetics or of Jay Adams in counseling or of Edmund Clowney in preaching. All these strengths notwithstanding, I would contend that no small part of the genius of Westminster has been its commitment to retaining a curriculum in which each locus in systematic theology receives its due, and that at a time when institutions have been jettisoning such a commitment and going to two or three theology courses to cover the entire theological encyclopedia. A Westminster remaining committed to sustained attention to systematic theology and re-invigorated in some of the ways suggested by Horton and VanDrunen in this volume would only prove a blessing to the church of our Lord Jesus Christ for years to come.

—Alan D. Strange

Paul J. Visser, *Heart for the Gospel, Heart for the World: The Life and Thought of a Reformed Pioneer Missiologist, Johan Herman Bavinck [1895-1964]*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003. Pp. 343. \$35.00.

J. H. Bavinck, the subject of this study, is well-known as a pioneering Reformed missiologist. In fact, many have described him as the first Reformed missiologist, or at least the first one from the Netherlands (in North America, Samuel Zwemer provides some competition). Bavinck's *Introduction to the Science of Missions* continues to be used as an introductory textbook for missiology courses in some Reformed seminaries. Regrettably, this and his *Church Between Temple and Mosque* remain the only volumes still in print that have been translated from Dutch into English. One other volume, *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World* is presently out of print. Consequently, Bavinck's impact on the English-speaking world has been relatively limited.

The publication of this book should provide at least a partial remedy. Paul Visser, a Protestant (PKN) pastor in The Hague, originally wrote this as his doctoral dissertation for J.A.B. Jongeneel at Utrecht. Its translation into English is a welcome addition, not only to the limited corpus of material on Bavinck, but to Reformed missiology in general.

The first two chapters are biographical, tracing the journey of Bavinck's life, especially drawing the connections with his immediate and extended family. His father and grandfather were both Reformed pastors, as was his more famous uncle, Herman

Bavinck. Throughout the book, the theological connections between the uncle and his nephew continue to be elucidated. In fact, only Hendrik Kraemer is referred to more than Herman Bavinck.

Among other interesting elements in the biographical section, we find some discussion on Bavinck's role vis-à-vis the Liberation (*vrijmaking*) of 1944. This event, which led to the separate existence of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), took place while Bavinck was Professor of Mission Studies in Kampen. The appointment to this position took place under the shadow of some controversy. One of the leaders of the Liberation, Klaas Schilder, objected to Bavinck's candidacy because of his apparent deference to psychological insights over Scriptural ones in an early book. However, to his credit, Bavinck was eager to placate objections and, after his appointment, sat down with the faculty at Kampen to explain his position. This seems to have had its intended result. However, when the split of 1944 took place, Bavinck remained with the larger group – a fact which does have significance for the later development of his missiology, especially with respect to questions of ecumenicity and the World Council of Churches.

In the following seven chapters, Visser systematically maps out the terrain of Bavinck's missiology. The value here is that Visser incorporates a wide assortment of Bavinck's literature into the discussion. This helps to solve a few mysteries for those familiar only with his *Introduction to the Science of Missions*. For instance, why does Bavinck not mention Jonah in his chapter on the Old Testament? One might expect at least a passing mention, if only to refute the idea that Jonah is somehow an Old Testament missionary. Visser helps English readers solve the mystery. Bavinck dealt with Jonah in an earlier introductory volume, *Zending in een wereld in nood*: "...in the book of Jonah there is no mission in the true sense, because the purpose of Jonah's mission is not 'to found a congregation of God in Nineveh.'" (188).

Visser sees Bavinck as being original in his missiology and gives ample evidence to support this. Bavinck's views on the relationship between word and deed, elenctics (missionary apologetics), *possessio* (a variation of contextualization), and his theology of religions are all clearly explained. The author works with Bavinck's ideas critically, noting the developments of thought throughout his career, particularly with respect to psychology and theology of

religions. Moreover, Visser indicates places where there could have been improvement. He also suggests directions for further research—for instance, with Bavinck’s trinitarian interpretation of general revelation.

According to Visser, Bavinck has been greatly influential and remains relevant today. With respect to the former assertion, there can be no question. A host of Reformed missiologists trained under Bavinck or were influenced by him. The fact that his *Introduction* is still in use might seem to support the assertion of his continuing relevance. However, Bavinck is still used in some places because there is nothing else available of the same depth and calibre. *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* is outdated, first having been published in Dutch in 1954 and then in English in 1960. The time is right for a new seminary-level Reformed textbook on missions. Visser’s book, since it forms an outline of Bavinck’s thought, will certainly be helpful for laying some basic foundations for such a text, and, indeed, for the development of Reformed missiology in general.

—Wes Bredenhof

Rowland S. Ward, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: A Study Guide*. New Expanded Edition. Wantirna, Australia: New Melbourne Press, 2004. Pp. 303. ISBN 09586241-8-6. \$18.00.

Pastors and laypersons who wish to study the Westminster Confession need look no further than Roland Ward’s newly revised and expanded study guide to this venerable Reformed confession. Within the brief scope of each lesson (some thirty-three in all) Ward’s book carefully analyzes the confession, offering first an outline of the chapter under discussion, followed by an introductory statement, and then an exposition of the confession itself. Ward punctuates each lesson with “Thoughts from Other Minds,” which offers insights to the topic under discussion; these “thoughts” are diverse in selection, with varied citations from other Reformed confessions to quotations from either past or contemporary authors.

A positive trait of this study guide is that Ward exhibits a knowledge of seventeenth-century Reformed theology, especially in its British expression, and he therefore attempts, at least to some degree, to examine the confession within its own seventeenth-century context. Ward also interacts with some contemporary issues

and debates current in the church today. Each lesson includes a set of questions for discussion.

This is an ideal book for an adult Bible study class, and for any who want to become acquainted with this pinnacle Reformed confession.

—J. Mark Beach

Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul: A Review and Response*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004. Pp. xii + 273. ISBN 0-87552-649-7. \$16.99.

During recent decades, a growing debate has arisen regarding the interpretation of the apostle Paul's epistles and doctrine of justification. Known as the "new perspective on Paul," a new view of Paul's understanding of the gospel has challenged the older view that stems from the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

In this clearly written and helpful study, Guy Prentiss Waters provides a comprehensive summary of the new perspectives on Paul. Waters prefers to speak of "perspectives," since significant differences exist among the advocates of a new reading of the apostle Paul. Waters writes from the vantage point of his expertise as a professor of biblical studies at Belhaven College, and as a former student of Richard B. Hays and E. P. Sanders, two leading exponents of the new perspective. Originally presented as the John Hunter Lecture Series in 2003 at the First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, Waters' purpose is to introduce Reformed students to the historical background to the emergence of the new perspective, and to evaluate critically its claims by the standard of the Scriptures and the historic Reformed symbols, especially the Westminster Standards.

The strength of this study lies in its description of the long pre-history to the more recent emergence of a new perspective on Paul. For the last two centuries, Pauline studies have been focused upon the questions of the adequacy of the Reformation's interpretation of Paul, and of the relationship between Paul's understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Judaism. Waters ably demonstrates how the new perspective answers these questions and, in doing so, opposes the Reformation view that the doctrine of justification is the center of Paul's thought. He also provides a helpful critique of some of the exaggerated and unbiblical aspects of the new

perspective's interpretation of Paul's understanding of justification. In the closing chapter of the volume, Waters also addresses some developments in the Reformed community in North America, namely, the teaching of Norman Shepherd on the subject of justification, and the development in recent years of what is called the "federal vision." While recognizing the differences between the new perspectives and these developments, Waters maintains that there are some areas of correspondence between them. According to Waters, contemporary Reformed students need to be more discerning in their assessment of a number of new views of justification, which are being advocated in the circles not only of New Testament scholarship but also the confessional Reformed communities in North America.

Though this volume needs to be supplemented by other works that assess the new perspective on Paul, it is a worthy contribution to the debate. This is one of the more important sources that pastors and other interested members of the Reformed churches can consult on the debate regarding this new view of Paul's teaching.

—Cornelis P. Venema