

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Theological German: A Reader*, by Helmut W. Ziefle. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986. Pp. 283. \$14.95.

This paperback presents German readings from the Bible (Part 1), from theologians (Part 2), and from Ziefle's own book *Eine Frau gegen das Reich*. Readings in the first two sections have been printed on the right page, with vocabulary helps printed on the facing page. A multiple-choice exercise to test the student's accuracy and comprehension appears with each reading in these sections. An answer key is printed separately for the independent student.

The interest-quotient will vary among the theological readings. Gerhard Maier's "Der Zweck der Schrift, die Hielsgeschichte und die Stellung des Christus" will compete well with Martin Niemoeller's "Das Haupt der Kirche" and Peter Stuhlmacher and Helmut Class' "Das Alte Testament und der Kanon." Selections include treatments of Bible passages (Adolf Schlatter and Hans Walter Wolff), of biblical theology (Dietrich Mendt and Albert Schweizer), and of dogmatics (Karl Barth).

Helmut Ziefle is professor of German at Wheaton College, where he has taught since 1967. This volume, together with his *Dictionary of Modern Theological German*, will help students at every level to read a wide variety of theological works in German.

Nelson D. Kloosterman

*Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant and Scholastic Theology*, by Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985. Pp. 340. \$14.95.

Theology's technical language, Richard Muller correctly insists, is still Greek and Latin. What preacher-theologian can forget his first encounter with *communicatio idiomatum* and *extra calvinisticum*, or his first trysts with *hypostasis* and *ordo salutis*?

This *Dictionary* will open up Lutheran and Reformed theological sources to the inquiring mind. An "introductory theological vocabulary" is all that this volume intends to offer those wishing access to Barth and Berkhof, Weber and Hodge, and other doctrinal theologians of historical importance. The non-exhaustive English index to key terms allows access for beginning and experienced theological students alike.

Because it helps serious students find their way in post-Reformation Protestant theology, we applaud this work and wish for it a long and enduring employment.

Nelson D. Kloosterman

*New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright. Consulting editor, J.I. Packer. The Master Reference Collection. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988. Pp. 738 + xix. \$24.95.

In the face of continuous, prolific publication of introductory helps for Bible and theology students, we may expect InterVarsity's *New Dictionary of Theology* to defend its right to existence. Its editors quietly and simply announce that defense: "to provide the enquiring reader with a basic introduction to the world of theology" (p. vii).

And that world is ever changing, as "new" articles in this *New Dictionary* suggest, among them "African Christian Theology," "Narrative Theology," "Imagination in Theology," "Bioethics," "Structuralism," and "Liberation Theology."

The Bible student finds in this *Dictionary* useful introductions to significant persons and topics in the field known today as Biblical Theology. Students of historical and doctrinal theology will find here articles full of helpful biography and historical analysis, detailing doctrinal developments in the Christian church.

Most helpful are the bibliographies that follow the articles, indicating foundational sources to which the reader may turn for more information.

The *Dictionary's* 205 contributors from five continents have written some 630 articles from a broadly evangelical point of view. These pieces share the same weaknesses and strengths of any other introduction, those relating to brevity and depth. The article treating common grace suffers from too much brevity, while that dealing with Russian Orthodox theology possesses unexpected detail. Most readers will likely be surprised to discover that the article on Dutch Reformed theology deals exclusively with the theology of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa.

It is unfortunate that the editors identify each article by its author's initials, requiring us to return repeatedly to the list of contributors at the book's beginning. But this minor irritant should not hinder our welcoming this solid contribution to theological study in the English language.

Nelson D. Kloosterman

*Word of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, by Leland Ryken. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987. Pp. 382. \$15.95.

At times preachers wonder why people, old as well as young among church members, find themselves strangely unattracted to the Bible. After all, it is the covenantal word of God's grace and glory. Here are the wonderful words of life for all who believe.

For this distaste there are, to be sure, many causes. But one of these may well be the manner in which it is printed. Convenient as is the division of its several books into

chapters and verses, this hardly makes its appearance attractive. Often these divisions are far from felicitous. They make the book look too much like a recipe-box for proof texts. Even paragraph indentations do not help much. Until we also teach people that Holy Scripture is literature of a high order, it will seem more like cod liver oil than the candy that is "sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb."

Ryken, who is professor of English at Wheaton College, renders his readers (even those with no more than high school education) a distinct service. He introduces us to Holy Scripture as literature without in any way compromising its authority and reliability as divine revelation. Two earlier volumes of his prepared the way for this recent volume: *The Literature of the Bible* (1974) and *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (1984). What we have here is a complete revision of the first which adds also much of what is found in the second by way of explications of various texts.

For this author the Bible is also unique because of the form(s) in which it has been written. Especially three are to be recognized: (1) theological exposition; (2) historical account; and (3) literature, which he defines broadly as that which "appeals primarily to our imagination (our image-making and image-perceiving capacity)." These three "impulses" he finds intertwined throughout its pages. Hence it may be "approached from different perspectives and with different interpretive methods." On these features he focuses our attention in passages of widely different kinds. Here are riches which can be neglected only to our detriment, even to the point of completely misunderstanding what is written.

Ryken demonstrates the validity of his thesis with a marked degree of success. Even the casual reader can observe that much of the Bible is narrative. It consists of "stories" of several kinds. To each in turn we are introduced. Thereupon follows a lengthy and informative section on its poetry. Several kinds of psalms are discussed as well as the Song of Solomon. Especially helpful is his chapter on "Explication of Biblical Poetry, What to Say about a Poem"

(pp. 207-225). Parents as well as teachers and preachers can use material profitably to help make these inspired songs experientially real and vivid to those who are less well-informed. The examples chosen by the author for detailed exposition are helpful in exposing the rich and rewarding depths found in biblical poetry.

The last section deals with such less well-known forms of literature as encomium, proverb, satire and drama. Helpful aids in using the volume are its glossary and three indices. Teaching and preaching the Bible as God's Word in man's language can become more colorful, insightful and challenging when done also in the light of what Ryken has written here.

Peter Y. De Jong

*Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament*, by Leland Ryken. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987. \$11.95.

This companion volume to the author's *Words of Delight* also deserves a high measure of commendation. On the basis of the guidelines for literary interpretation laid down in the other book he now addresses himself in more detail and depth to the several writings of the New Testament. Too frequently, he believes, the New Testament has suffered from neglect by literary critics who esteem its pages too little worthy of being considered "literature." With this estimate he takes sharp issue.

From a literary viewpoint he finds in these books "a mingling of convention and innovation, of the familiar and the new." But their uniqueness he urges, is to be found much more in their "content and theological claims than [in] their form." The several genres he believes were immediately recognizable to the first readers and despite the centuries which have passed should be apparent to readers now if they are properly to understand and interpret the messages of the New Testament. Also here theological exposition, historical record and "literature" as he defines them are happily

wedded. Repeatedly he points to the "artistry" which may easily escape the reader because he has become too familiar with these writings and tends to treat them too casually. At no point can it be thoroughly understood by the believer apart from acquaintance in depth with the Old Testament, not only because Jesus Christ is the fulfillment thereof but also because of the use of figures of speech, symbols and terms of reference which root in those earlier writings.

The three literary genres (Gospels-Acts, Epistles and Revelation) are dealt with as literature in clear, concise and instructive fashion. A separate chapter is devoted to the many parables, which the author does not hesitate to call "allegorical" in the sense that "the essential feature of allegory is that of double meaning: a detail of the story also stands for something else." But this is never to be confused with allegorizing a text which is not intended as an allegory. A chapter is devoted to "Poetry, Proverb and Hymn" in the New Testament and another to "Oratory. . . in which the dramatic impulse is everywhere evident." In this section the Sermon on the Mount, Paul's address at Athens, and First Corinthians 13, are submitted to literary analysis.

What may well surprise some readers is that Ryken finds the book of Revelation "the most thoroughly literary book of the Bible." While replete with strange images, characters and events, all these forms should be familiar to those acquainted with the rest of Scripture. "If we simply take the time to piece together the separate strands in the book," he is convinced, "there is no reason why we should find it a perplexing book." Here he insists we have a story, a drama, an apocalypse, an epic and that within "an epistolary framework." All the events mentioned literally happen (whether in past, present, for future) but they are presented in the symbolical language which John received in visions. The "key" to this book he finds in chapter 12, where the incarnation of our Lord is described in symbolical terms. "A lot of interpretive nonsense will be avoided if we follow the interpretive method that the Bible itself suggests for this type of prophetic writing"--a much needed caution for these days

when much nonsense is being peddled by way of printed page and pulpit.

Here the reader will find much that is helpful. One may balk at a few of the terms which the author employs and disagree occasionally with an interpretation. In no way, however, does this detract from the valuable contributions which are set forth in simple, straightforward, precise and withal delightful language.

Peter Y. De Jong

*The Works of Josephus*, trans. by William Whiston. New updated edition. Complete and unabridged in one volume. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987. Pp. 926 incl. indexes + maps. Cloth. \$19.95.

The writings of Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, are indispensable to a proper understanding of Jewish thought, background and history before and during the time of Christ. These writings include *The Jewish Wars*, *The Antiquities of the Jews* (the story of the Jews from creation to the fall of Masada), and *Against Apion* (an apology of Judaism against pagan slander).

For this massive volume the entire text of Whiston's translation has been re-typeset in modern type. Other improvements include the addition of the Loeb numbering system for ease of reference, the updating of all citations and cross references, and transliteration of Greek words. The indexes have been corrected and expanded. Geographical information is provided by the new maps.

Students of the New Testament environment will welcome this fine production. For greater ease of research and reading, this new printing *The Works of Josephus* will satisfy for a long time to come.

Nelson D. Kloosterman

*Christus op aarde: Zijn levensbeschrijving door leerlingen en tijdgenoten*, by Jakob van Bruggen. Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament. Derde serie. Kampen, the Netherlands: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1987., Pp. 287. Fl. 49.50.

The Dutch series *Kommentaar op het Nieuwe Testament*, begun in 1922, published by H.A. van Bottenburg, has been a standard NT tool for several generations of biblical students. Names like F.W. Grosheide, S. Greijdanus, C. Bouma and J.A.C. van Leeuwen are synonymous with careful study and clear writing. The second edition of this commentary was begun in the 1950s by J.H. Kok publishers, but remained incomplete. This third series is new in one important respect: though continuing the tradition of offering commentary on Holy Scripture, its volumes will be arranged in sections or groups (Gospels, Epistles, etc.).

The first group of commentaries intends to treat the Gospels, with its first volume providing a comprehensive discussion of their *historical* character and content. (A later comprehensive volume will treat the *teaching* of Christ.) Two questions form the arrangement of this work: (1) In what manner do the Gospels provide us a description of the course of Jesus' life?; and (2) On the basis of these descriptions, what picture (incomplete though it be) can we form of Jesus' stay on earth?

The author helps us understand his intention by explaining the title. "*Christ on Earth*" reminds us that the study of Jesus' earthly life can never be disjoined from our faith in his continuing work after resurrection and ascension. The author's objective, therefore, is that our honor for our heavenly King increase through attention to the path he traveled here on earth.

Of the book's seventeen chapters, the first three argue the presuppositions and method of understanding the NT Gospels. Chapter 1 identifies and evaluates various sources for the description of Jesus' life, including pagan and Jewish authors. Chapter 2 bites into perhaps the most sensitive and significant area of Gospels-interpretation, namely, the character of the Gospels as *history*. The larger part of the book,



which treats the various periods of Christ's life, is introduced in Chapter 3 with an explanation of the value of arranging and studying Christ's life according to chronological periods.

Dr. van Bruggen's fresh look at the alleged inadequacies of harmonization puts into a tight corner those who summarily dismiss the value of the Gospels' history by saying "the Gospels are not biography." That, says Van Bruggen, is a half-truth: yes, the Gospels do something else than provide a literary-historical product; yet they contain intimate historical details that most biographies omit--place names, times (often to the hour), numbers (six jars at Cana's wedding), etc. In other words, those who, by their claim that the Gospels are not biographies, wish to dismiss the Gospel-writers' intention to describe history do a grave injustice to the Gospel-writers.

Several considerations help move us away from the extreme of modern Scripture-scepticism with regard to the Gospels. One is that the Gospels are about a unique individual, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. Moreover, the Gospel-writers knew that with Jesus Christ, and with their accounts of his earthly life, they were dealing with revelation-history. Finally, each Gospel-writer was aware that he was looking back upon this life with eyes enlightened by the Spirit of Christ; men who at first did not believe, or were slow to believe, looked back through the Holy Spirit to recall and write not merely personal reminiscences, but powerful revelation.

As we read the Gospels we must always keep in mind the writer's stated intention and known readers. In addition, we must know the time in Christ's ministry when the event or teaching occurred that we are studying. To aid us in this, Dr. van Bruggen devotes the remaining fourteen chapters to a chronologically organized overview, complete with charts, of Christ's earthly life. One obtains thereby a sense of the movement of our Savior's life and ministry, in its parts and its entirety.

There are many reasons to recommend this book warmly and enthusiastically. Among them is the fact that most pastors trained during the past twenty-five years have been given a (perhaps mildly) critical approach to the Gospels, leaving them holding crumbs broken apart from the whole, giving them nothing of redemptive history to preach. Here is a remedy for that, a serious treatment of the *history recorded in the text and given to the church*. Mastery of this book will open the reader to a lifetime of exegetical and homiletical insights. We look forward eagerly to the continuation of this well-begun series!

Nelson D. Kloosterman

*Systematic Theology*, by Charles Hodge. Abridged Edition. Ed. by Edward N. Gross. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. Pp. 565, including indexes. \$24.95.

Anyone who recognizes and appreciates the contribution of Charles Hodge to the history of theology, and particularly to the development of Reformed theology, will welcome this republication of his three volume *Systematic Theology* in abridged form.

In his preface, the editor, Edward N. Gross, provides an account of his objective in presenting this abridgment for publication. Due to the importance of Hodge's *magnum opus* as an expression of his mature theological reflection, as a representation of the "old" Princeton theology, and as a resource for the student of theology today, Gross hopes his abridgment will make it more readily accessible. Since many theological students are intimidated by the original work, comprising some twenty-two hundred pages in three volumes, there is a need for a condensed version which will be more useful than the original, unabridged version.

According to Gross, the guidelines he has followed in condensing or abridging Hodge's original work were determined by this objective. Since many of the historical sections in Hodge's original work dealt with figures and arguments pertinent to his time, but no longer to the present theological

context, those sections which are predominantly historical in character and which contain arguments dealing with Hodge's contemporaries are omitted. Thus, the abridgment endeavors to retain the Biblical-exegetical portions of the original, while omitting much of the historical analysis. Another guideline followed is that of general accessibility to readers who are not versed in scholarly exegetical work or in the non-English (mostly Latin) sections of the first edition. Finally, Gross also acknowledges the principle of symmetry in his abridgment. Acknowledging Hodge's own interest in the original with symmetry and proper balance, he seeks to retain the same relative prominence of material in his abridgment. The original balance and contents of the first, unabridged edition and of the abridged edition are readily evident from the table of contents, which places in brackets those portions deleted in the abridgment.

It is evident that this abridgment is a "labor of love" and that Gross is motivated by a desire to make Hodge's theological work useful to today's theological students. His own convictions about the importance of Hodge's contribution to theology underlie the substantial work involved in preparing this condensed version.

Those who recognize the importance of Hodge's place in the history of theology, particularly in the development of evangelical and Reformed theology in America, will salute Gross for his accomplishment. Though it may provide the occasion for ignoring the original--the chief limitation and temptation of any abridgment--Gross' objective is admirable and unobjectionable. Provided that students of Hodge recognize its natural limitations (some of the historical material deleted, for example, is of continuing interest), this edition should fulfill its promise to make his original work more accessible.

This is true even though some might not share Gross' enthusiasm for Hodge's theological work. Though one may have, as I do, some serious reservations about Hodge's theological method, this should not prevent a recognition of the monumental achievement and influence of Hodge's theology. Nor should it prevent one from recognizing its continued

usefulness as a textbook in Reformed theology for students in the present.

For this reason, the publication of this abridgment may well prove to be an important event in the continued history and development of Reformed theology.

Cornelis P. Venema

*Church, Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament*, by C. K. Barrett. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985. Pp. 110. \$6.95.

The venerable author, now professor emeritus of New Testament at Durham University, England, delivered the substance of this volume in a series of lectures which clarified his position with regard to the much-debated proposed union between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of which he is member. His opposition was not to "unity of the two churches, but only to the kind of unity sought, and the means proposed for achieving it." This slim volume, however, is not specifically polemical. His purpose is to call the churches everywhere back to what he deems "the centralities" of what it means to be truly church in the world, also today so long after the death and resurrection of its glorified Lord. These he insists are to be found clearly in the New Testament. As a scholar long engaged in the study of this field he presents what he is convinced is urgently to be remembered and practiced.

The book consists of four chapters, each carefully crafted and filled with some very rich insights.

The first deals with foundations, entitled "From Jesus to the Church." With many of the analyses and conclusions which the author presents the reader may disagree, yet the issues which he raises are crucial and must be honestly faced. None of the churches today--and with this every Reformed churchman will agree--is or even can be an exact representation of the early New Testament congregations. What changes have developed will have to be justified in the light of the central affirmations of the New Testament itself, if a

church is to be truly church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this challenge is given by the writer.

Although we would wish to see clearer stress on the normativity of Scripture, the urgency of preaching and the specifics of ecclesiastical authority at points, there are many striking statements which ought to give us pause. We quote only one:

What stands out when we move from the New Testament to the post-apostolic literature and the post-apostolic church is not so much the addition of something fresh as a deficiency in theological criticism, a theological criticism which is based upon the life, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus, and is capable of seeing that the church is most central in the purpose of God when it sees itself as most peripheral.

As an attempt to call church leaders and church members to the basics or, as Barrett prefers to call these, "the centralities," these pages deserve careful reading.

Peter Y. De Jong

*Loflied en Hekeldicht, de geschiedenis van Calvijn's enige gedicht*, by E. A. de Boer. Haarlem: AcaMedia, 1986. Pp. 127.

Here is a little "jewel" which deserves to be added to all collections on Calvin's life and labors. It is in a class by itself. It asks and gives answer to the intriguing question whether Calvin was also able to laugh heartily. And the answer, surprising no doubt to many because they see him only as an austere preacher, pastor and theologian, is an unqualified affirmative. Written in the Dutch language, this work likely will not receive the wide reading public which it eminently deserves, not only because of the subject discussed in detail but even more because of the scholarly yet readable way in which the material is presented. We hope that some competent translator will soon provide us with an adequate English translation.

Here we have the full story of Calvin's only attempt to write poetry and that of comparatively high order, that is, aside from the few psalms which he versified for use by his congregation.

It need not surprise us that he was able to do this. His excellent training in the classics supplied the necessary competence and stimulus. The poem is his *Epinicion Christocantata* of January 1, 1541. It was not published until four years later and then at the urgent request of friends who noticed that it, too, with Calvin's other writings had been placed by Rome on the index of prohibited books.

The occasion for this piece of literature is rehearsed in some detail. Calvin and his friends were cooling their heels, waiting for the arrival of their Roman adversaries who had been invited by the emperor to meet with Protestant representatives in a vain hope to resolve the religious conflicts which were tearing apart the empire. But Calvin was not discouraged. Although expecting neither resolution of the issues nor even a measure of accommodation to the evangelical faith by its foes, the reformer spent some hours composing this poem to testify to his faith in the full victory of Christ and his cause. Toward the end of this work he none too gently satirizes the callous pride and pomposity of Rome's representatives.

The poem appears in its Latin original. Anyone conversant with that tongue can only stand amazed at not only Calvin's erudition in classical matters but also at his felicitous use of that language. The author has appropriately provided his readers with a suitable Dutch translation which, in the nature of the case, does miss a little of the flavor and force of the original.

An illuminating chapter considers the propriety of using satire and irony in defending the evangelical Christian faith against its foes. Calvin and others in his day did not hesitate to make use of this method, especially to reach and capture the attention of the common folk who could hardly be expected to read with comprehension the lengthy polemical writings which were flooding the marketplaces in those

years. For this they, and the author as well, can offer biblical warrant. The prophets of the Old Testament, the apostles and even our blessed Lord employed this method, but always with restraint. So did Calvin. Of the 128 lines only a few expose the vanity of his opponents together with their boasts; all the rest of the poem proclaims the triumph of the Savior-King. And to glorify him was always the chief aim of Calvin's life and work.

With the appearance of this volume another vacuum in our knowledge and understanding of Calvin is being filled. Very few biographers of the reformer even allude to this piece of writing, although Doumergue devotes some attention to it and the style in which it was composed. For de Boer's thorough and excellent presentation we express our sincere gratitude.

Peter Y. De Jong

*R. B. A Prophet in the Land*, by Edward Heerema. Jordan Station, ON: Paideia Press Ltd., 1986. Pp. 223. \$9.95.

The history of any communion can hardly be written without attention given to the leading figures and persons who did so much to shape its particular life and development. Students of Christian Reformed Church history, therefore, will find this biography of the life and ministry of Rienk Bouke Kuiper, otherwise and affectionately known as "R.B.," a fascinating and helpful window upon a segment of that history. Written by the Reverend Edward Heerema, himself a son-in-law of R.B., this biography carefully and thoroughly traces the life and work of R.B. as a preacher, a theologian, and a churchman.

Based upon both a first-hand acquaintance with his subject and careful research and study, Heerema provides a thorough and insightful portrait of R.B. Though he acknowledges in his preface that this study bypasses for the most part one important facet of R.B.'s work, his role in the support and advocacy of Christian education, he does endeavor to trace out three primary facets of that work. These were the areas of preaching, of theological education,

and of church leadership. The unifying theme of the biography is that, in each of these areas, R.B. distinguished himself as "a prophet in the land." The pre-eminent feature of all his labors was an unwavering commitment to the truth of the Word of God and to the Reformed faith as a summary of that truth.

The unifying thread that binds Heerema's biography together is this emphasis upon R.B.'s "zeal for the integrity of the truth of God's Word" (p. 8). Heerema frequently returns to this theme in describing R.B.'s early years and training in a Reformed pastor's home, his first pastorates, his labors as president of Calvin College, his involvement as a professor at Westminster Seminary, his tenure as president of Calvin Seminary, and his writings throughout each of these periods. R.B. was a man of his word, a preacher who effectively ministered the Word of God, a teacher of preachers, a defender of the faith, and an author of books in defense of the biblical, reformed faith.

Sometimes, as Heerema traces out the life of R.B., one has the impression that his biography is too devotedly written, and that it lacks the perspective and needed distance requisite to a balanced account. Nonetheless, the impact of R.B.'s person and work upon those around him and the history of the Christian Reformed Church during his life-time is readily apparent. As one who was raised in a Christian Reformed home where the name and memory of R.B. was frequently invoked with fondness, I can recognize in Heerema's portrait the impression R.B. left on many. R. B. Kuiper did distinguish and spend himself, as a prophet and minister of God's Word, in the propagation and defense of the Reformed faith. This aspect of Heerema's story rings true.

However, the reader of this biography is also left with the impression that Heerema has another underlying thesis that he never explicitly or extensively addresses. The thesis is that R.B. saw the glory departing from the Christian Reformed Church, fought against this development, and was in his last years no longer heeded by his own communion. Admittedly, this is a highly controversial matter and brings



the biography into rather direct conversation with the present state of affairs in the Christian Reformed Church. Perhaps it might be argued that to address this question would involve the author in commentary which oversteps the boundaries of biography. And yet, the biography itself raises this question in its treatment of R.B.'s last years. Given the importance of this question and the fact that it does arise within the biography itself as an aspect of Kuiper's life and work, it would have been helpful were it to have received more direct attention.

Despite these limitations of Heerema's closeness to his subject-matter and the incompleteness of some aspects of his biography, those interested in the history of the Christian Reformed Church will find this a sometimes fascinating, highly readable, account of the life of R.B. And those who share the concerns of R.B., that the truth of God's Word and the Reformed faith be affirmed and defended today, will continue in his line.

Cornelis P. Venema

*Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1, Prolegomena to Theology*, by Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987. Pp. 365. \$12.95.

For decades, also in Reformed circles, those theologians who followed after the demise of the early Protestant reformers of the 16th century have received not only a poor but frequently a prejudiced press. By many they have been largely ignored; by others they have been misrepresented if not maligned as having destroyed the vitality of evangelical Protestantism by encasing its teachings in a rigorously logical and lifeless systematics. Scholasticism has become a term of reproach and even contempt during the past fifty years, often by those who are at a loss to give a clear definition of that term.

To set the record straight the author, associate professor of historical theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, has pledged himself to address this subject in a three-volume

work of which this is the first. As he notes, this first volume, though dealing thoroughly and appropriately with a general survey of the period and with prolegomena, lacks a concluding chapter, a bibliography and an index. These will be incorporated in the final volume. What we have here is a massive yet thoroughly readable piece of scholarship which everyone at all interested in the roots, the rise and the development of the Reformed branch of Protestantism should feel compelled to take seriously. Muller is eminently qualified to deal with this period of Reformed orthodoxy because of earlier contributions, such as his *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, and his *Christ and the Decrees: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*.

He objects strongly, for example, to playing Calvin against the Calvinists as has been attempted in recent decades. Instead, his thesis is relatively simple. Without this period of Reformed (and to a lesser extent, Lutheran) doctrinal development, the cause of evangelical Protestantism would have been lost. Here for more than a century and a half the recovery of biblical teachings as set forth by the early reformed of the 16th century was defended, clarified and codified in harmony with the classic ecclesiastical confessions which had been officially endorsed. Only in this way, by adopting what is called the "scholastic" method, could the churches stand strong against the continuous attacks on that faith by Romanists, Arians, Arminians, Enthusiasts and free-thinkers of various kinds. But even more was it essential that the gains of the early reformers be safeguarded and perpetuated. It was necessary that not only the discontinuity, but also the continuity of Reformation thought with early and medieval Christian thought, be firmly demonstrated. Here was intense intellectual grappling with fundamental issues which deserves respect. The more so because in the use of their reasoning powers, Holy Scripture was not only the source but also the norm and final arbiter of their dogmatics. To call them rationalists or even rationalistic in their approach to and understanding of the Christian faith is to misrepresent them and their work. Nor was Christian dogma, narrowly conceived, their sole concern; many of

them also discussed and disputed and wrote voluminously on Christian ethics and even Christian piety or devotion. To all this, then, the author in this first volume begins to direct our attention.

Here, we believe, is a seminal book not to be ignored in any theological school worthy of the name, least of all among those which claim to be confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian. Douglas A. Kelly has aptly commented on its significance.

It seems very likely that all competent future studies of the theological tradition lying between the close of the Reformation period and the beginning of the secularist enlightenment will have to proceed by way of Muller. . . . Even those who may strongly dissent from Muller's conclusions will be likely to agree that his arguments are weighty and that an appropriate response to them will require serious research, hard thinking, and careful formulation.

This volume is divided into two sections. The first is an introduction. Here he defines the terms, discusses the relationship between orthodoxy and scholasticism in Protestant thought, refers to the necessity and appropriateness of "system" for Reformation theology, and outlines the three phases of Reformed doctrinal development during this period when "the strong homiletical and catechetical motives" of the early Reformation made way for theology as "more and more a creature of the schools." Men were now prepared not only to minister to their congregations, but in this calling to defend the faith against its adversaries. This chapter concludes with a valuable summary of the authors and writings of that period.

Following this we find the author's detailed discussion of the indispensability, content and significance of prolegomena as it seeks answers to fundamental questions which "provide a crucial index to the character and intention of a theological system." Only when an accurate analysis of this material is available can Reformed orthodoxy or scholasticism be properly evaluated. Here both the

continuity and discontinuity between medieval and Reformation theology come into sharp focus. Miller also does not hesitate to take sharp issue with those who argue that the theologians of this period paved the way for rationalistic theologies of the eighteenth century and/or derived their theology from some single doctrine like predestination. This chapter can serve well as a wholesome antidote to much biblicistic or philosophical theologizing so much in vogue in our time.

In the course of his survey of the development of theological prolegomena the author feels free to challenge the positions taken by such worthies as Heppe, Weber and Althaus in their assessment of the Reformed orthodoxy of that period. It passed from the scene, so he claims, not because of any irrelevance or uselessness of its arguments but rather because of a failure of nerve when facing a radically new worldview which had begun to entice succeeding generations.

Nearly three quarters of the volume, comprising seven chapters, are devoted to the Reformed orthodox prolegomena to theology.

Each of these discusses one or more of those questions which are fundamental to and determinative for theology proper. The first deals with the meaning of the terms "theology" and "religion," including a consideration of their relationship to each other. Then the parts and divisions of theology are reviewed, including the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology. How these theologians dealt with natural and supernatural theology is presented at some length because of the challenges thrown out to them by purveyors of other systems of thought. In connection with the object and genus of theology Muller discusses the issue of theology as *scientia* and as *sapientia*, theology as theoretical and as practical. Other matters pertinent to a theological prolegomena, such as the use of reason and philosophy in theologizing, theology as a discipline and the *principia theologiae*, round off the section.

We mention these specifics in the hope of whetting the appetite of all who are convinced that Christianity consists

of more than a passing decision for Christ or an emotional experience which may be present today but gone tomorrow. With nearly every one of these theologians who labored from 1575 to 1730 and shortly thereafter, the author finds a strong and sustained commitment to Holy Scripture, indefatigability in analyzing and exposing what they deemed the errors of their opposition, and a wholesome concern "to come to terms with the establishment of the great sixteenth century protest as a church in its own right, and with the need of that new ecclesiastical establishment to be orthodox and, indeed, 'catholic' in the broadest sense of the term." For this they deserve greater appreciation and better understanding than they have usually received in the past.

This volume is indispensable for coming to grips with that long and fruitful period of Reformed theological development. But it does more. It makes one eager for the appearance of the next two volumes. As far as we are able to judge, the author does justice both to the theologians of the period which he discusses and to those scholars with whose evaluations he differs. In so far as he may have an axe to grind, he sharpens and uses this well, thus opening the way for ongoing discussion.

Here is more than a historical review. Muller involves us in questions, problems and issues which are as urgent now as they were three or more centuries ago when Reformed orthodoxy was in its ascendancy. No confessionally-committed Reformed professor, pastor, teacher or theological student can afford to ignore the intellectual and spiritual stimulus which a careful reading of this book provides.

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