

## BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Archibald Alexander, *A Brief Compendium of Bible Truth*. Ed. Joel R. Beeke. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2005. Pp. xii + 220. ISBN1-89277-35-5 \$15.00 (cloth).

As the title of this volume accurately indicates, it aims to provide a brief summary of the teaching of the Bible. Written by Archibald Alexander, the first professor of Princeton Theological Seminary and a key contributor to the “old Princeton” theology, the book’s purpose was to provide “plain, common readers” with a summary of the main doctrines of the Bible. Recognizing already in his day that not all believers were capable of reading and digesting larger works of Christian theology, Alexander produced this volume as a simple introduction to the system of doctrine that is taught in the Word of God.

Alexander divides his “brief compendium” into thirty-eight chapters of approximately five pages in length. The topics treated range from the “being of God” (chapter 1) to the doctrine of hell (chapter 38). Following the traditional distribution of doctrinal subjects, Alexander’s summary reflects the order of the three Articles of the Creed (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) and treats the most important subjects of each of the *loci* of dogmatic or systematic theology. It is interesting to observe that several chapters address the doctrine of the church and her means of grace (chapters 30-34). The importance of the church in Alexander’s compendium belies the suggestion of some that the theologians of “old Princeton” did not have a high view of the church.

Reformation Heritage Books is to be commended for making this compendium available again. Since Alexander was a figure of great prominence and influence in the development of the tradition of old Princeton theology, this little volume will prove to be a useful source for the study of the history of Princeton. But as the editors note in their helpful preface, this volume should also enable “twenty-first century readers to comprehend those biblical truths that matter most for their walk as believers in today’s world” (ix). The editor’s decision to break up some of Alexander’s long sentences and to add textual references in brackets should enhance the likelihood that this will occur.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Karl Barth, *The Church and the Churches*. Foreword by William G. Rusch. New edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005 (1936). Pp. 71. ISBN 0-8028-2970-8 \$12.00.

The author of the foreword to this republication of Karl Barth’s address to the global Second World Conference on Faith and Order (1937) admits that it is not usually regarded as a classic text of the modern ecumenical movement. However, in his judgment, and presumably that of the publisher, it deserves to be included in the short list of important texts that document the challenge of ecumenism in the modern period.

Students of Karl Barth will immediately recognize some characteristic traits of Barth’s writing style and theological emphases. On the one hand, Barth’s communication laments the fragmented and divided condition of the churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world. On the other hand, he decries any attempt to realize the imperative of church unity through strategies and devices, including the ecumenical movement, that do not begin with a living confession regarding the Lord and Head of the church, Jesus Christ. The unity of the church is not ultimately a unity to be achieved by the churches, but a reality in the living voice of Christ himself. As Barth expresses it, “[h]omesickness for the *una sancta*’ is genuine and legitimate only insofar as it is a

disquietude at the fact that we have lost and forgotten Christ and with Him have lost the unity of the Church. . . . If we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, then the question of the unity of the Church will most surely become for us a burning question” (15). The fundamental basis for any realization of the churches’ calling to be united is a common and living confession of the truth concerning Jesus Christ: “A union of the churches in the sense of that task which is so seriously laid upon the Church would mean a union of the confessions into one unanimous confession. If we remain on the level where confessions are divided, we remain where the multiplicity of churches is inevitable” (41).

Compared to much of the literature of the ecumenical movement, Barth’s essay of seventy years ago has a vitality and honesty that are seldom seen. In a formal sense, his claim that church unity stems from a living, united confession regarding Jesus Christ is indisputable. Barth speaks the language of the Reformed churches when he insists that the church is united only if it listens to the voice of her Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. The problem that Barth’s address, and the modern ecumenical movement, has not been able to resolve, however, is where that voice is to be heard and how its authority is to be acknowledged in the form of a common confession.

For those interested in Barth’s contribution and approach to the ecumenical movement, this volume will be a welcome addition to a still-growing corpus of Barth’s writings in English translation.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3: *Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Ed. John Bolt. Trans. John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. ISBN 0-8010-2656-3 \$49.99 (cloth).

With this third volume now in print, the Dutch Reformed Translation Society’s project to make Herman Bavinck’s dogmatics available in English translation is nearing completion. Following the precedent of the two previously published volumes, this translation has a number of commendable qualities. The

translation of John Vriend renders Bavinck's Dutch original in fluent English, and includes a translation of many of Bavinck's quotations from French and German sources (original language quotes are either translated or relegated to the footnotes). The editor, John Bolt, includes a fine introductory essay on Bavinck's life and thought, and has once again composed a number of general summaries of the doctrinal content of the chapters. Though Bavinck's paragraph numbering is retained in brackets for cross-reference purposes, the editing of this volume includes the following features: descriptive headings are provided for the distinct sections of the dogmatics; bibliographic references are in some cases corrected, and in others updated with newer, more accessible sources in English; a consolidated bibliography is included at the end of the volume; and a selected Scripture index, as well as name and subject indexes are provided. The Dutch Reformed Translation Society and the editor are to be commended for producing such a fine and useful English translation and edition of Bavinck's most important theological work.

Since I have had occasion to review the first volume of this set in a previous issue of the *Mid-America Journal of Theology* (15 [2004]: 207-11), I will forego any further comments about the characteristics of this translation and edition of Bavinck's dogmatics. However, to whet the prospective reader's appetite for this volume of Bavinck's dogmatics (as well as the others), I would like to highlight some of the subjects that Bavinck treats in this volume. Bavinck's handling of these subjects exhibits the qualities we had occasion to emphasize in our previous review: the priority of Scripture and confession as sources and norms for a Reformed dogmatics; the catholicity and breadth of Bavinck's thought; the contemporaneity of his interaction with debates that were current at the time of the writing of his dogmatics; and the consistent spirit of humble inquiry that marks Bavinck's efforts. Despite those occasions where Bavinck's dogmatics reflects the limits of its time of writing, his dogmatics stands as an extraordinarily rich source for Reformed theology, particularly in

the example of proper method that Bavinck displays throughout this and the other volumes.

The contents of this third volume of Bavinck's dogmatics cover the doctrine of sin and salvation through the person and work of Christ. Part one treats the doctrine of sin, especially the difficult problems associated with the doctrine of original sin. Part two addresses the topic of Christ's person in the context of the covenant of grace. Part three treats the work of Christ. And Part four introduces the subject of the application of Christ's saving work through the office of the Holy Spirit. Utilizing the traditional language of the doctrinal *loci* of systematic theology, this volume treats a portion of the doctrine of man (anthropology), the doctrine of Christ (Christology), and the doctrine of the application of salvation (soteriology).

Three topics that Bavinck addresses in this volume are worthy of a comment or two. Since these remain controversial topics in contemporary theological discussion, Bavinck's contributions are of particular interest and benefit.

The first topic is the knotty theological problem of original sin. In his handling of this topic, Bavinck appeals to Romans 5:12ff. in order to affirm not only the universality of human sin but also the occasion for the introduction of sin and its consequences, a state of guilt and a condition of hereditary corruption, through the sin of one man, Adam. In a remarkably concise and dense treatment of the argument of this passage (pp. 83-4), Bavinck insists that there is a pervasive analogy drawn between the sin and disobedience of the first Adam, whose one act of transgression as mediator of the covenant of works implicated all his posterity as guilty, and the righteousness of Christ, whose one act of obedience as mediator of the covenant of grace, constituted all those who are united to him by faith as righteous. Bavinck summarizes the argument well: "the idea that Paul develops in this pericope comes down to this: (1) upon the one trespass of Adam, God pronounced a judgment consisting in a guilty verdict and a death sentence; (2) that judgment was pronounced over all humans because, in some fashion that Paul does not further explain here but that can be surmised from the

context, they are included in Adam; all were declared guilty and condemned to death in Adam; (3) in virtue of this antecedent judgment of God, all humans personally became sinners and all in fact die as well” (85). Throughout his handling of the subject of original sin, Bavinck does not hesitate to argue for a clear view of original sin and to refute the errors of historic Pelagianism. He also affirms the “immediate imputation” of the guilt of Adam’s sin to his posterity on the basis of a classic Reformed view of Adam’s position by God’s ordinance as covenant representative. Though Bavinck leans strongly toward a “covenant representative” view of the union between Adam and his posterity, he also acknowledges the legitimate interest that undergirds the “realist” view of this union. In his handling of this extraordinarily difficult subject, Bavinck does not shrink from the hard questions of biblical exegesis or Christian theology, nor does he fail to state clearly the answers to these questions that he finds the most satisfying.

The second topic is Bavinck’s treatment of the covenant of grace as the biblical framework for a proper view of the person and work of Christ. In this section of the volume, Bavinck exhibits an intimate acquaintance with the history of Reformed covenant theology, and adopts a position that is a model of clarity and balance. The covenant of grace, which is ultimately rooted in a pre-temporal intra-Trinitarian “covenant of redemption” (*pactum salutis*), represents the historical instrument by which the Triune God purposes to return fallen sinners to life and communion with himself. Whereas the first Adam broke covenant with God and brought the sanction of the covenant upon himself and his posterity (condemnation and death), the second Adam, the Son whom the Father appointed and furnished to be the mediator of salvation, fulfilled all the obligations of the covenant on behalf of his own. By virtue of Christ’s saving work as the mediator of the covenant of grace, the elect people of God come to enjoy restored communion with God and obtain their inheritance in the covenant. All the benefits of the covenant of grace, including principally justification and sanctification, are the fruit of the believer’s union with Christ, the covenant mediator. Justification, which refers to the believer’s acceptance with God and

inheritance of eternal life, is based wholly and exclusively upon the obedience of Christ, who fulfilled the law's obligations and suffered its penalties on behalf of his people

At the conclusion of his treatment of the covenant of grace, Bavinck offers a compact discussion of the relation between the covenant of grace and election that displays a balance seldom seen in contemporary debates (cf. the so-called "Federal Vision"). Though Bavinck notes that the "covenant of grace" in its historical administration should be distinguished from the "covenant of redemption," he resists the temptation to separate between them. The covenant in its historical administration is the means that God uses to realize his purpose of election in the salvation of those whom he gives to Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Though the covenant of grace comes with demands of faith and repentance that may be termed "conditions," Bavinck insists that these conditions are themselves realized in the elect by God's grace. Since the covenant is the means whereby God's sovereign purpose of election is realized, it finds its origin and source in the sovereign initiatives of God's grace. Whatever the covenant stipulates in the way of faith and obedience, is granted to the elect in whom the Spirit works by the means that God has appointed.

According to Bavinck, if we define election in terms only of the covenant in its administration, we will not be able to resist the Arminian teaching of "conditional election." Likewise, if we identify covenant with election, we will not be able to do justice to the way human responsibility is undergirded by the covenant relationship between God and his people. The covenant of grace requires election in order for it to be fruitful unto salvation and to maintain the monergism of divine grace. But election requires the covenant of grace in order to understand the concrete way God's grace is communicated to his people. The distinct, yet inseparable relationship between covenant and election requires that we distinguish between those who are "in covenant" (*in foedere*) with God, believers and their seed, and those who are truly "of the covenant" (*de foedere*), the elect. As Bavinck notes, "the covenant of grace will temporarily—in its earthly administration and dispensation—also include those who remain inwardly

unbelieving and do not share in the covenant's benefits. With a view to this reality, Reformed scholars made a distinction between an internal and an external covenant, or between 'covenant' and 'covenant administration'" (231). The failure to make these kinds of necessary distinctions can only lead, Bavinck argues, to erroneous formulations of the doctrine of the covenant.

The third topic that I wish to mention is Bavinck's handling of the question of an *ordo salutis* ("order of salvation"). Here again Bavinck's customary balance and care as a theologian are clearly in evidence. While recognizing that the Scriptures do not give a precise delineation of the various facets of the application of Christ's saving work by the operation of the Holy Spirit, Bavinck offers a robust defense of the biblical propriety and necessity of a carefully defined "order of salvation." Though the work of salvation in believers is one great work of the Holy Spirit through the gospel, the benefits of the believer's saving union with Christ by the Spirit must be distinguished. Christ, who objectively accomplished all that was necessary to the salvation of his people, distributes various benefits to those who are united to him by faith. In his description of the order of salvation, Bavinck cogently argues for a traditional "order" that begins with calling, leads to conversion (faith and repentance), and grants the benefits of free justification (a new status of acceptance with God on the basis of Christ's righteousness) and transformative sanctification. Contrary to some critics of the idea of an *ordo salutis* who claim that it tends to focus theology's attention on the subjective experience of grace, Bavinck insists that it describes the manifold work of Christ's Spirit in the application of redemption. Bavinck also preserves the sheer graciousness of God's communication of salvation in Christ to his people by emphasizing that every aspect of the believer's experience of salvation is rooted in God's electing grace and the provisions of the covenant of grace in Christ.

Though these are only a few examples of Bavinck's handling of the doctrines of sin and salvation, they illustrate something of the balance and richness of his dogmatics. Though readers will not always agree with Bavinck's conclusions, they can learn a great

deal from him about how the discipline of dogmatics should be pursued. Careful attention to the witness of the whole Scripture (*totus Scripturae*), intimate acquaintance with the history of theological discussion, sympathetic respect for the church's summary of Scriptural teaching in the confessions, careful treatment of the complexity of theological formulations, and a willingness to propose a doctrinal solution only after the problem has been thoroughly examined—these are some of the qualities that distinguish Bavinck's dogmatics from others of lesser value. This volume, like its two predecessors, deserves to be on the shelf (or better, on the lap to be read) of any would-be student of Reformed theology.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, *Holy People, Holy Land: A Theological Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005. Pp. 266. ISBN 1-58743-123-8 \$19.99.

Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering teach at a relatively new Roman Catholic academic institution, Ave Maria University in Naples, Florida. According to the website for the school, it seeks to teach in complete loyalty to the Roman church's magisterium. At Ave Maria University, Dauphinais and Levering are associate professors of theology, while Dauphinais is also the associate dean of faculty.

The book these men offer is basically a retelling of the storyline of the Bible, but they make comments along the way of their narrative that connect elements of the story to appropriate theological *loci*. They clearly identify Augustine as their guide in the reading of the Bible, quite fitting to a Roman Catholic approach in biblical studies that seeks to fall within the tradition of the church. The goal of the book is “to renew an Augustinian mode of reading and teaching the Bible, for the purposes of offering an introduction to the Bible's theological meaning” (19).

The authors also bring in material at appropriate points from Thomas Aquinas, John Paul II, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI). The authors have

read widely, showing acquaintance with the biblical theological works of Romanist and non-Romanist alike (e.g., J. Levenson, N.T. Wright, G. Wenham, H. Frei, etc.). While they are familiar with the more critical tradition of scholarship, they do not get sidetracked in their reading by discussion of source or form criticisms, redactional history, etc., of the text. The canon of the Christian Scriptures as received and accepted in the Catholic tradition is assumed to be the material to be studied in this book, without delving into speculation about something behind the text.

The book is divided into ten chapters, five of which focus on Old Testament themes (Eden, Abraham, Moses, David, and Psalms and prophets), while the last five chapters deal with the New Testament through a survey of the Gospels of Matthew and John, Romans, Hebrews, and the Revelation of John.

The theological grid that Dauphinais and Levering develop is fairly standard in biblical studies, namely, that the Garden of Eden situation reveals that God, who is love, created a world of holy people who dwelled with him in a holy land. This holy existence was all lost with the entrance of sin. "Human beings have lost the gift of original justice and therefore desire the things of this world in such a way that they have closed themselves off from the presence of God" (250). Sin is viewed as an affront to God so serious that death is the appropriate penalty for mankind (86, fn. 5). But the historical storyline that follows the expulsion of the unholy couple from the no-longer holy land consists of God's gracious and loving initiatives to recover both a holy people for himself (through the emergence of his king, who creates justice among the people), and a holy land for himself (through the priest, temple, and liturgical worship). Through the holy people, settled into a holy land, a fourfold harmony results: with God, with oneself, with other people, and with the world.

As the authors tell the story contained in the Bible, they repeatedly draw our attention to the framework of sin and grace. God works out his plan of recovering a holy people (the church) and a holy land (new creation) through a series of covenants and by means of covenantal personnel (e.g., 90, 96, 102). Their point comes through in the discussion of the Mosaic law where God's

law is not seen as a list of rules, but a road, a path to holiness (see the fifth chapter). They write, “The focus of the law is not on doing certain actions, but on becoming a certain kind of person. Certain actions are necessary, but the aim is the cultivation of the virtues so that the person shares in the self-giving holiness of God” (147).

But the divine covenants cannot bring about a changed heart or life. This change requires divine action through God’s Spirit. Dauphinais and Levering frequently state that the change in the sinner’s heart and life requires divine work: man does not change himself.

The authors write from a confessionally Roman Catholic point of view, but at most points this comes across rather muted. The most explicit tilts toward Romanist doctrine come through in their discussion of Matthew 16 (Peter as the rock upon which the church is built) and of John 3, 4, 6 and 7 (water of baptism and Christ’s flesh as the continuing *locus* of divine life for the church today). Jesus Christ is clearly revealed as the new temple, from which the living water (in his blood) will flow (cf. Ezek. 47:1ff.; John 19:34). They add, “Jesus reveals his incarnational plan for how his disciples will abide in him and he in them—the Eucharist” (178). They say further, “Jesus shows that this tabernacling is not limited to his historical life on earth but will be made available to each generation of believers through the Eucharist” (179). Later they write, “If believers want eternal life, they must enter the body of Jesus through belief in him, through baptism of water and the spirit, and through feeding on his Eucharistic flesh” (182). Protestant readers can clearly hear the Romanist (Augustinian) viewpoint coming through (i.e., salvation is through faith *and* the sacraments of the church, sacraments that work through their administration).

In addition to the concern just noted, there are some other areas of strong theological disagreement to this reviewer. On page 149, footnote 25 makes the curious statement, “Only Christ justifies sinners, but this does not mean that only Christians—let alone all Christians—are righteous.” In this connection they refer to “saving implicit faith” (225, 226). The non-Christian who truly

believes that God exists and who sincerely seeks him, is saved through Jesus Christ, whether such faith is explicit or implicit in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ and our obedience lead to our salvation (N.B. the synergism in soteriology). Dauphinais and Levering state that “our faithful obedience is the necessary condition for our acceptance of the free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.” Then they add, “The way to the eternal Sabbath rest, perfect holy land, comes through our faithful obedience to Jesus Christ as our merciful priest-king” (224). Such obedience is the free choice the sinner makes, in their view.

The authors’ discussion of the message of Romans is also very disappointing. If their material on John strongly hints at a Romanist view of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, the consideration of Romans clearly points in the direction of a Roman Catholic understanding of soteriology. Dauphinais and Levering openly acknowledge indebtedness to the writings of (non-Romanists) N.T. Wright, R. Hays, F. Thielman, etc. They take their cue from the inclusional statements that Paul makes about the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). The authors see no conflict between Paul and James on justification and good works, in that what Paul was excluding from the sinner’s justification are the ceremonial works of the law, but not the works of moral obedience (194ff.). To be sure, all is of grace, they affirm. Yet there is no resounding affirmation of justification by grace alone through faith alone, *apart* from the works of the law, in the viewpoint of the authors. They say, “Paul has not excluded moral works from justification” (200). Later, they write, “To become justified thus means to have entered this new covenant, to become a new creation.” This occurs through Christian baptism (202). “Justification includes moral obedience and righteousness” (202). They add, “There is no separation between justification and sanctification since both refer to God’s free gift of restoring human beings to holiness... In Christ... our good works are no longer unclean but have become instruments of righteousness and sanctification” (203). And again, “Justification includes obedience to the moral law” (209).

Furthermore, the semi-Pelagian error comes through time and again in their discussions of the salvation of the sinner. While, on the one hand, Dauphinais and Levering claim that all is of God's grace, yet the sinner is *free* to accept or reject God (cf. 206). They assert, "God does not harden the heart of the sinner against the sinner's free will" (207), and "we complete our adoption" (209). The authors clearly have stayed within the framework set forth by the Council of Trent, that is, they affirm an Augustinianism that still falls under the umbrella of the Roman Catholic *regula fidei*.

A few minor errors exist in the book. The post-exilic temple is said to have been rebuilt in the "fifth century BC" (169), whereas it was rebuilt near the end of the sixth century. The name "Philip" is misspelled as "Phillip" on page 184.

Keeping in mind the strong caveats noted above, the book *Holy People, Holy Land* is a well-written, helpful review or survey of Israel's history. But it is much more than that. It serves as a sometimes almost devotional discourse that continually pulls together Old Testament revelational elements and themes (e.g., land, people, water, temple, sacrifice, king) and connects them with fulfillment in Jesus Christ and the Christian church of the New Testament redemptive era. The symbolism and typology of early Scriptural revelation are handled in a very temperate way, one in accord with a long-standing tradition of reading Scripture (cf. Irenaeus on how to see the unity of biblical covenants reaching consummation in Christ). Preachers would benefit in reading many portions of *Holy People, Holy Land*, especially the chapters dealing with Old Testament material. This book portrays both the broad picture of how the history of revelation and redemption moves along a very purposeful divine plan, as well as how the specifics along the way of that history all fit coherently and come together in Christ.

The book also serves a somewhat indirect catechetical purpose, pointing out to the reader that the storyline of the Bible has been heard for centuries, and how the church's listening ear has responded with confessions and a system of doctrine in which sin, salvation, and obedience to God have received articulation.

The redemptive-historical line of understanding Scripture, to which this reviewer holds, receives a boost from this book, and this book, with the caveats about its Romanist directions at points, noted above, can be read with some profit.

While there is no separate bibliography at the end of the book, a useful index concludes *Holy People, Holy Land*.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

James R. Edwards, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. 264. ISBN 0-8028-0981-2 \$16.00.

In this volume, Edwards, who is professor of biblical languages and literature at Whitworth College, Spokane, Washington, addresses a basic question that the Christian church has faced throughout its history. As Edwards notes in the introduction to his study, this question has become particularly acute in contemporary North American evangelicalism, which is often more accommodating of the spirit of the age than it is transforming. The modern climate is not agreeable to the kind of absolute claims that the Christian church has traditionally made regarding the person of Christ as the only Savior. In the face of this challenge and the temptation of the church to compromise its testimony, Edwards sets out to show that this is a basic, nonnegotiable of Christian conviction, and that it is able to be persuasively defended against its most vigorous modern opponents.

In his introduction, Edwards defines the problem that the contemporary church faces in maintaining the claim that Jesus is the only Savior. Employing the metaphor of the “shore” and the “current,” he argues that Christians need to beware of the currents of contemporary culture without permitting themselves to be swept away from the shore of basic Christian conviction. When believers allow themselves to drift with the currents of contemporary thought, they can quickly lose sight of the fixed contours of historic Christian conviction, which require to be upheld and proclaimed in every generation. Among the currents

of contemporary culture that Edwards identifies, and that he regards as inimical to the Christian conviction that Christ is the only Savior, are the shift from acknowledged religious authorities to “religious preferences,” and a “designer” approach to religious faith, which allows people to “pick and choose” among those features of faith that suit their personal tastes. In order to make a case for the teaching that Christ alone is Savior, we need, according to Edwards, to have a clear portrait of the daunting challenges posed by the anti-authoritarianism and individualism of modern and post-modern assumptions.

Edwards organizes his study by first delineating the challenges presently confronting the Christian claim that Christ alone is Savior, and then articulating a case for reasserting this claim by an appeal to the reliable testimony of the Scriptures. Chapters 1 and 2 begin with a summary of the challenge to this Christian conviction that stems from the influence of the Enlightenment and the critical deconstruction of the biblical witness to Christ. Chapter 3, which plays a critical role in his subsequent argument, sets forth a case for the broad reliability of the biblical writings and seeks to refute some of the skeptical claims of modern biblical criticism. After presenting his case for the reliability of the Bible’s testimony, Edwards summarizes in chapters 4 and 5 what the New Testament says about the person of Jesus and his self-testimony. Upon the basis of these preliminary and foundational chapters, the remainder of the study treats several features of the Bible’s teaching that support the claim that Christ alone is Savior: Chapter 6 provides a general summary of what the Bible says about Jesus as Savior; Chapter 7 evaluates the weight of this biblical testimony in confrontation with modern pluralism; Chapter 8 addresses the challenge of moral relativism to the exclusiveness of the Christian claim regarding Christ; Chapter 9 argues for the relevance of the Christian proclamation of the gospel of Christ despite the challenges of post-modernism; and the concluding three chapters consider the implications of Edwards’ thesis for questions of world peace (Chapter 10), and of other world religions (Chapters 11 and 12).

As this brief sketch of the contents and argument of Edwards' book indicates, he has tackled an important subject, and does so in sustained debate with contemporary currents of religious practice and thought that undermine the claim that Christ alone is Savior. In his preface, Edwards notes that he writes for two kinds of readers: first, for Christians whose faith conviction may have been "unsettled" by contemporary challenges and who need to regain "their sea legs"; and second, for modern agnostics who may be open to hearing a "plausible" account of the Christian claim regarding Christ. In order to gain a hearing from both kinds of readers, Edwards deliberately cultivates a simple style of writing that endeavors to translate difficult concepts into accessible language for a general readership. Readers of this volume will find that he admirably achieves this goal, so that his book provides not only a case for the Christian conviction regarding Christ as Savior but also provides an illuminating discussion of the principal features or "currents," to use his preferred term, of modern religious practice. Even those who may not be persuaded by the case Edwards makes, or the approach he takes to his question, will be able to glean a considerable amount of insight into the mind of the people to whom the gospel today must be proclaimed. To offer a sampling of this insight, Edwards cites the remark of popular talk show guru, Oprah Winfrey, that "[o]ne of the biggest mistakes we make is to believe there is only one way. There are many diverse paths leading to God" (203).

Whether Edwards succeeds in his larger purpose to provide a plausible case for the Christian conviction regarding Christ depends upon how one assesses his apologetical approach. To use traditional categories, Edwards is a kind of "evidentialist" who, though acknowledging the role that presuppositions play in evaluating evidence, aims to show that the Christian view is the "most probable" or likely interpretation of the evidence. Rather than arguing for a strong, whole-hearted embrace of the biblical testimony regarding Christ, Edwards is content to clear away some common obstacles to granting the Bible a fair hearing. While Edwards capably argues against some of the common misconceptions and prejudices that oppose the Christian

testimony regarding Christ, he operates within an apologetical framework that never challenges in a direct way the unbelief of those who reject this testimony. If I may play with Edwards' characterization of moderns as devotees of a "designer religion," it seems that his approach leaves moderns free, and even encouraged, in their autonomy to embrace (albeit, only in the form of a "probable hypothesis") the Christian viewpoint or to reject it. In the final analysis, the reader is left "to be the judge" whether the exclusive claims of the Christian message are worth embracing as likely true or better rejected.

Though this is a significant weakness in Edwards' book, the strengths of his study still make it a worthy contribution to a subject of obvious importance to the contemporary Christian church.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. 197. ISBN 0-8010-2730-6 \$17.99.

Dr. Enns lays before the reader the problem of what the Old Testament presents when viewed against what Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature has discovered in the last 150 years. He intends to present a new approach to the Old Testament that resolves the tension between what it actually says and that it is "ultimately from God and that it is God's gift to the church" (14).

The author writes in a readable style, although the reader is often unable to understand easily his intent, e.g., in using the word "diverse" to characterize the form and content of Scripture, does Enns mean to say that the Bible offers "different" or "actually contradictory" statements and views? Enns displays a thorough knowledge of ANE literature and of exegetical, theological and other interpretive matters. At the end of his book, he presents readers with a very helpful dictionary of technical terms, a useable bibliography (although it is one-sidedly occupied with non-

evangelical, non-Reformed, and neo-evangelical writers). A helpful index is also included.

Enns points to many problems that beg for answers—problems that evangelical and Reformed scholars have, in fact, answered. Enns however is not satisfied with these answers. He indicates that he shares “many evangelical instincts” (13), and presents himself as standing between those who gainsay the Bible on the one hand and those who defend it as inspired on the other. He defines inspired in the sense that its teachings form a unified whole and its reports are not to be construed as myth or unreliable history, which entails (1) there is a self-consistent system of theology in the Bible; (2) its reports are factually true, (there are no real contradictions in the Bible); and (3) the Old Testament should be interpreted basically and primarily through grammatical-historical exegesis (e.g., E. J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth*, [Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1957]). Enns says, “I want to contribute to a growing opinion that what is needed is to move beyond both sides by thinking of better ways to account for some of the data, while at the same time having a vibrant, positive view of Scripture as God’s word” (14).

He accepts the Bible as the word of God and as a document presenting diverse, even contradictory, reports in fact and teaching. His response to those who might object to his position is that this is the nature of what God has given us; we should accept it as it is! Moreover, we should understand the Bible according to an incarnational analogy; it is both divine and human, having all the attributes of each nature just as Jesus possessed both natures (though his human nature was without sin). Hence, according to Enns, Jesus was at once omniscient and not omniscient, etc. Similarly, the Bible is both human and divine. It is the word of God, but has many of the characteristics of other extra-biblical, human documents. Just as we accept the human and divine in Christ, so we should accept the human and divine in Scripture. But as we shall see, the incarnational analogy breaks down, for, as Enns presents it, Jesus is both divine and human (yet without sin), while the Bible is both divine and human, “with sin.”

The incarnational analogy appears, on the surface, quite helpful, but it hides an approach quite distinct from that of someone like E. J. Young and other conservative biblical scholars.

The author focuses on three issues that he believes “have not been handled well in evangelical theology” (15): (1) the Old Testament and other ANE literature, specifically why the Bible looks so much like that other literature (this is a question concerning the Bible’s uniqueness); (2) the matter of “theological diversity in the Old Testament,” or why the OT offers different teachings about the same issue or topic (this is a question about “contradictions” in the Bible and touches on the Bible’s integrity or trustworthiness); and (3) the way New Testament writers handle the Old Testament (this is a question about how the Bible is interpreted).

In discussing the biblical accounts of creation, fall, and the flood, Enns notes that each account exhibits great similarities to the mythological accounts found in ANE literature or the myth-narratives treating these matters, although the biblical narratives are not directly dependent on those myths. Enns defines myth as “*an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories*” (41). In this sense, the biblical stories are of the same nature as the extra-biblical myths and originated long after them. Enns grants that the ANE myths were “made up” stories “aimed at answering questions of ultimate meaning” (41). He argues that they flow out of general revelation: “I like to think that the imprint of God is so strong on his creation that, even apart from any knowledge of the true God, ancient peoples just knew that how and why they were here can be explained only by looking outside themselves” (41). Similarly, says the author, God allowed his word to come to the ancient Israelites according to standards they understood—ancient standards of truth and error and not modern standards.

Enns expressly rejects the traditional and conservative negative reaction to this. That reaction has proven to be problematic, for “it implicitly assumed what their opponents also assumed: the Bible, being the word of God, ought to be historically accurate in all its details (since God would not lie or

make errors) and unique in its own setting (since God's word is revealed, which implies a specific type of uniqueness)" (47).

But Enns's proposed answer to the question, "Is Genesis myth or history?" is itself very problematic. While he affirms that Genesis is history, it is a *biblical* history that is *not accurate* in all its details. More pointedly, he rejects the idea that "...the Israelite stories were actually older than all the ancient Near Eastern stories but were only *recorded* later in Hebrew." Writes Enns, "Such a theory—for that is what it is, a theory—would need to *assume* that the biblical stories are the pristine originals and that all the other stories are parodies and perversions of the Israelite original, even though the available evidence would be very difficult to square with such a conclusion... [Such reasoning is an] excuse for maintaining a way of thinking that is otherwise unsupportable" (52).

Enns explains his view in these words: "The reason the opening chapters of Genesis look so much like the literature of ancient Mesopotamia is that the worldview categories of the ancient Near East were ubiquitous and normative at the time. Of course, different cultures had different myths, but the point is that they all had them" (53).

This is a remarkable conclusion for one who maintains that the Bible is the word of God. Jesus not only said that God's Word is truth (John 17:17), but spoke of the history recorded in Genesis 1 as true and reliable when he said that the devil was a murderer and liar from the beginning (John 8:44), and that God made man male and female from the beginning (Mark 10:6). This is not to deny that there are some similarities in form between the Bible and ANE myths, but there are also formal and essential differences—differences that should not be overlooked in formulating one's doctrines of inspiration and of the nature of the biblical revelation.

For most believers, the statements of Jesus are adequate and compelling evidence that the accounts of Genesis 1, etc., are essentially history and not myth, and history in the sense of setting forth what actually happened—i.e., the details they report are accurate. Moreover, the ancient biblical histories bear the marks

of antiquity and, although they may have been written down after the ancient pagan myths, they must precede the pagan myths (1) in origin (they come from God); (2) historically (temporal appearance); and (3) in truthfulness. Finally, the ethical, moral, and theological distinctiveness of the biblical accounts is by no means reproductive of the ANE milieu. They do **not** repeat the worldview categories of pagan cultures (cf. Coppes, *What Say the Stones* [Providence Presbyterian Press, Thornton, 2005]).

In regard to patriarchal history and morality, Enns writes that “There is no claim being made here [in the biblical text] that the social customs of Israel’s first ancestors are the result of God’s unique intrusion into human affairs,” and “there is no suggestion in Genesis that these social customs are there by God’s design and *that* is what makes them ‘okay’” (57). In a similar way, regarding the law of Moses, Enns says, “What makes Israel’s laws revelatory is not that they are new—a moral about-face vis-à-vis the surrounding nations—but that *these* are the laws that were to be obeyed in order to form Israel into a godlike community” (57). Thus, with reference to the morality and ethics of the Mosaic record, Enns concludes that its uniqueness lies in its use and not in what it reports or teaches—although he does grant that some of the laws revealed through Moses are unique in content. “What makes Israel’s law and wisdom literature unique is not so much what it says (although that is certainly true with various laws), but Israel’s claim to be connected to the one true God who alone has the right to lay these claims upon them” (59).

Now while one might agree that the ethical practices of Abraham and his family were very much the same as what is seen in ancient law practices attested (e.g., in the Nuzi documents), this is far from saying that the distinction between the Bible and the ANE ethics is primarily a matter of its theological use. Indeed, it does appear that God used those ancient cultural conventions, but it is equally clear that the lives and culture of the patriarchs unfolded against the background of God’s revealed covenant. Hence, while the ANE law practices are not overtly redemptive in thrust, those of the Bible are. First, Abraham and his family lived in view of, and in pursuit of, the city whose builder and maker is

God (Heb. 11:9-10, 13-14). Second, much of Abraham's (and his sons') actions are also in response to the promised seed of the woman who was to destroy the works of Satan (cf. Gen. 5:29, Heb. 11:12, 17-18). Finally, the traditionalists recognize that, as Jesus believed and taught, the Old Testament patriarchs (and parts of the Mosaic law) did things that were not "up to snuff"; and Jesus disapproved their actions, and even noted that some of the positive law was "irregular" (to say the least), as when he said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8). There is a higher standard than some parts of the Mosaic law, and ancient "believers" should have known that (cf. Rom. 2).

Enns's discussion of the Mosaic law is particularly disturbing, since the author seems to deny that the Mosaic law, though given by special revelation, sets forth an ethic and theology that, while having formal parallels with ANE law at several points, far excels ANE law itself. This is not the place to detail such an assertion about biblical law, but it has been established repeatedly. It is evident that the ANE laws, in contrast to biblical law, function in a milieu of a polytheism approving and encouraging lying, sexual immorality, stealing, and murder, just to mention a few matters. At many points, therefore, biblical law is shown to be essentially distinct from ANE law. Moreover, the ancient Near Eastern religions practiced temple harlotry; they worshipped by means of sexual immorality; and many scholars think that the Palestinians (who seemed to have gathered the worst of all religious practices) even offered up their babies to their gods. This is far removed from the pristine worship set forth by Moses (cf. Coppes, 131). While there are clear formal parallels in the structure of the temple and some ANE worship practices, biblical worship is far removed from that of the ANE in its focus on true godliness rather than on the sensual desires and practices of the ungodly. Where the pagans created a religion of salvation by works, God revealed a religion of salvation by grace through faith. These principles were not simply different ends to two virtually similar religious systems (formally), they are what is expressed and worked out in two essentially different systems (formally and essentially).

Interestingly, Enns, in spite of Deut. 4:8 ("And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"), remarks, "When Israel, therefore, produces a body of law and wisdom, it is not to say, 'Look at this new thing we have that no one else has.'"

Moreover, Enns proposes that the Bible teaches both monotheism and polytheism. This is specially illustrated by the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3). "Modern readers might be tempted to add, 'But of course, as we all know, there *are* no other gods.' But this is not what the text says or implies, and we must resist the temptation to assume that ancient Israelites had at their disposal what we do: a fuller revelation of God. The first commandment says not 'There *are* no other gods' but 'You *shall have* no other gods.' Yahweh is saying, 'You saw what *I* did in bringing you up from Egypt. Now, *I* am the one you are to worship, not the gods of Egypt you are leaving behind nor the gods of Canaan you are about to encounter'" (101-102).

Thus the Bible presents diverse teachings about God, i.e., diverse theological systems. To the question whether God changes his mind, Enns responds by saying "no" and "yes." God is presented as the God who is transcendent and as the God who is immanent in the sense that he changes his mind or plans in response to man's prayers, actions, etc. Thus Enns writes: "I am well aware that from a philosophical point of view, one can answer this quite simply by saying that God may *act* as if his actions are contingent, but in *reality* they are not. My concern, however, is with the *Bible* and what it says, with how God *acts* in Scripture" (105). In another place Enns says this: "'But surely not the Bible,' one might say. 'The Bible is from God. It must be consistent, unified. Whatever we might be able to say about *other* types of ancient books, the Bible is a message to be proclaimed, not a loose collection of diverse theological points of view. After all, God would not want to confuse us like that.' But such a line of reasoning serves only to detach the Old Testament and God himself from the world into which it first spoke" (109).

According to our author, the books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles present diverse (contradictory) accounts, “It has been common practice among evangelicals to harmonize accounts such as these, for example, to say that somehow Nathan said both to David (perhaps he had two separate audiences with him) and that Samuel-Kings is reporting one speech while Chronicles is reporting the other. But such an explanation will run into many problems if it is applied consistently wherever one sees diverse accounts of the same phenomenon. To insist that, somehow, Samuel-Kings and Chronicles must say the same thing about the same event tells us more about the modern interpreter than it does about the biblical texts. Moreover, it flies in the face of both the evidence and common sense. The plain fact of the matter is that in Scripture we have two divergent accounts of the same event” (65). Further, “Predictably, this raises the very good issue of the relationship between the text of the Bible and the events it reports. So, what did Nathan *actually* say? What 2 Samuel reports? What 1 Chronicles reports? Neither? A little of both? The answer is, “I don’t know, and neither does anyone else” (66).

So, is the Bible objective history? Enns says it is not—both in the sense that it is interpretative history (this does not necessarily mean it is inaccurate history) and in the sense that, like other ANE history, it does not see events as objective (what really happened) but as part of the interpretation. Hence, all attempts at harmonization of diverse reports miss the point that this is ancient, and not modern, history.

Thus, for Enns, the inspired word of God is a Bible that is diverse in its concept of history (myth is history), its factual reports (the historical books present diverse and even contradictory facts), and its theology.

The last section of the book treats the question of hermeneutics. What is one to make of the way the New Testament interprets the Old Testament insofar as the former employs several of the interpretative mechanisms of the Talmud? This question of manifold interpretative approaches was hammered out in the Reformation where it was concluded that, fundamentally, one must use the historical-grammatical method.

This position is encapsulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1:5 and 1:9): “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” And, “We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God) . . . .”

While one must recognize that New Testament writers might have at times used some of the hermeneutical approaches of the then contemporary rabbis, it must also be maintained that any tool that denies the simplicity and perspicuity of Scripture is **improperly** used (as taught in passages e.g., Deut. 30:14) by non-inspired believers, and among those exegetical aberrations are the tools developed by the rabbis. So, in contrast to Enns, we recognize such tools (if indeed they were truly used) were in the hands of inspired exegetes, who can go beyond the plain meaning of the text (i.e., what results from the application of historical-grammatical exegesis) precisely because it is God who is teaching them that significance, “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?” Even so, “no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11). This verse certainly applies to seeing things “between the lines” and things that are not known other than by knowing the mind of God. Moreover as Dr. Noel Weeks demonstrates, the argument that the New Testament employs “Rabbinic exegesis” is fraught with unproved assertions and assumptions (*The Sufficiency of Scripture* [Banner of Truth Trust, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988], 183ff.).

It is evident to this reviewer that Enns is not applying the theological and hermeneutical position of scholars such as Drs. E. J. Young and C. Van Til. These men held that while the Bible is not a book lowered from heaven, either in its form or its content, it is a book which men wrote, being altogether overshadowed by

the Spirit of God, so that what may be said about the Bible in its origin and content is this: "Your word is truth." As such, it is in its original publication without error in doctrine or fact.

—Leonard Coppes

Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. v + 318. ISBN 0-8028-4909-1 \$35.00.

Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology is marked by great erudition, prodigious scholarship, sensitivity to rival and secular truth-claims, and an irenic spirit; it also exhibits a respect for the Christian tradition. For these reasons alone, his thought should not be ignored.

In the introduction to this volume, Stanley Grenz (since deceased) alerts the reader that this study of Pannenberg's theology has three goals: (1) to present a synopsis of Pannenberg's thought by looking at the content and argument of his systematic theology; (2) to demonstrate how Pannenberg's dogmatic presentation follows from his methodological program, evidencing an internal and external coherence of doctrines with all knowledge; and (3) to interact with modern discussions of Pannenberg's theology. In doing the above, Grenz is likewise interested in exploring how Pannenberg's thought might lend assistance and provide insight for the North American theological community.

In successive chapters Grenz treats all the major topics of Pannenberg's dogmatic theology. In expositing these doctrines, Grenz shows how Pannenberg's project seeks to overcome the privatization of religious belief within society and of theology within the academy. This is an important part of Pannenberg's work. Pannenberg labors to put theology back into the public square and show how the truth of the Christian faith is for all humankind. Pannenberg thus argues that faith is grounded on historical knowledge, real historical facts, and theologians may not separate the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith. Likewise,

believers in general may not retreat to an arena of privatized “faith decisions” that float detached from evaluation and scrutiny. That said, Pannenberg knows that the battle for truth, and competing truth-claims, will prove provisional and contestable until the end of history when all will be revealed (and vindicated). This is inescapable.

As a human enterprise, theology is a labor of reason. Its task is to demonstrate the illuminating power of the concept of God. Coupled with that foundational motif is Pannenberg’s accent upon eschatology or the *eschaton* and the hope it entails. The kingdom of God is about the final lordship of God over creation, but the kingdom has already broken into human history in Jesus of Nazareth. As Grenz states, “En route to the *eschaton* the Christian community lives in hopeful expectation of the final consummation of God’s rule over the entire world. Only then will the glory and reality of the triune God revealed in his rulership be fully demonstrated.” Thus theology is also an enterprise of hope.

In short, Grenz points out that reason and hope form the two themes of Pannenberg’s project and mark its distinctive impact. Theology (specifically, systematic theology) as an academic discipline offers a reasonable account of Christian hope, and so it demonstrates the coherence of all its claims. This constitutes apologetics as well. Pannenberg’s theological labor as a whole attempts to obey the Petrine mandate “to give reason for the hope” of the Christian community (1 Pet. 3:15). In view of that, the title Grenz gives his book is apt, *Reason for Hope*.

For Pannenberg, God provides the unity of all reality. Since Pannenberg argues that God is the power that determines everything, he proceeds from that idea in the construction of his doctrine of God, wherein God’s deity is manifest in his lordship over creation. This means that the idea of God defines reality and illumines human existence and human experience. This is Pannenberg’s theology/apologetics in action. God explains both the world and human experience. Moreover, for Pannenberg (following Barth), God as Triune is foundational and first in an exposition of a doctrine of God, so that the question of his being and attributes follow after it. This means also that the divine

economy in the history of salvation grounds the doctrine of God, with knowledge of the ontological Trinity flowing from the economic Trinity.

This tracks with Pannenberg's accent on the historical, for theology must be grounded in public, historical knowledge. And so theology is not allowed a sheltered, protected corner within the academy, or a safe island (such as a certain kind of seminary) where it stands detached and isolated from the rigors of critical inquiry concerning historical reality upon which theology depends. Theology must re-enter human history and become public theology, showing how theological truth coheres with all human knowledge. For Pannenberg, the doctrine of God permeates all doctrine, or all doctrine is a further elaboration of the doctrine of God.

This has anthropological implications as well, for humanity, created in God's image and broken by sin, finds its destiny only in the eschatological glory. Only at the end of history does man as image-bearer reach his destiny. Like Barth, Pannenberg wants to preserve God's freedom by viewing revelation as a divine gift, not as deposited object. Unlike Barth, Pannenberg views the history of revelation as discoverable by historical-scientific method. Salvation history is part of universal history. But, again, the truth—or the final demonstraton of the truth—of salvation history must await the *eschaton*; until then all knowledge is provisional and subject to revision.

God's self-disclosure, then, awaits the end of history, but is proleptically present in Jesus Christ; in other words, the future has barged into the present of universal human history and become visible in him. Christ's resurrection anticipates the end of history, even as it constitutes God's confirmation of all that Jesus said and did. The revelatory significance of Christ's resurrection should therefore not be underestimated.

In the six chapters of this book, Grenz treats Pannenberg's approach to the dogmatic enterprise, the doctrine of God, creation and humanity, Christology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. What is helpful about this presentation is that the reader can use Grenz as a knowledgable escort through

Pannenberg's three-volume *Systematic Theology* or as a general introduction to Pannenberg's thought as a whole. For those approaching Pannenberg's volumes on systematic theology for the first time (perhaps not knowing what to expect), Grenz's work is very instructive and useful.

Grenz has given the theological community a fine book, clearly written and well-presented. It is successful in its stated goals, and indeed offers a comprehensive, accurate, and sympathetic overview of Pannenberg's theology. Longtime students of Pannenberg's work will appreciate the availability of a fine secondary source on one of the most important theological thinkers of the last fifty years, and newcomers will discover a "way into" Pannenberg's theological vision. Like much of Barth's work, in studying Pannenberg's theology, the reader is left enriched, even when his views prove troublesome or untenable. Grenz's volume honors Pannenberg with its even-handed presentation. It stands as the best general introduction to Pannenberg's theology for English readers.

—J. Mark Beach

D. G. Hart, editor. *Selected Shorter Writings of J. Gresham Machen*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2004. Pp. 590. ISBN 0-87552-570-9 \$39.99 (cloth).

D. G. Hart, editor of this splendid volume of Machen's writings, speculates that the essays in this book have perhaps remained out of print because various aspects of Machen as revealed in these writings are unpalatable to one group or another of his devotees. Fundamentalists might dislike his libertarian leanings or reconstructionists might dislike his doctrine of the spirituality of the church. These writings, reflecting Machen's position on these and other matters, would undoubtedly rub some of his erstwhile supporters the wrong way.

Whatever has kept these essays out of print no longer prevails, and their republication is most welcomed. Many of these writings were included in the 1951 volume of essays edited by

Ned B. Stonehouse, entitled *What is Christianity?* Stonehouse also published two other volumes in those years, a collection of sermons (*God Transcendent*) and his biography of Machen—both of which have remained in print over the years. *What is Christianity?* did not remain in print and this long overdue volume seeks to make up for this unfortunate omission, and even add to the original publication, so that Dr. Machen's sharp gospel sensibility might not be lost to the reading public.

One might well ask why it is desirable to keep Machen's writings, particularly these essays, in print. Quite simply, Machen was the premier defender of Christianity in America in the early part of the twentieth century. Machen's matchless defense is seen not only in *Christianity and Liberalism*, as well as in his masterworks defending the divine origin of Paul's religion and the virgin birth of Christ, but also in many of these essays in which he incisively, and with remarkable clarity, champions the truth.

The book is divided into ten parts, with forty-six selections organized under those larger sections. In an age that is losing its grip on what the gospel is and, more than anything else, needs to get the gospel right, a better tonic than Machen's bracing apologia could scarcely be imagined. The first two sections, "Christ and the Witness of Scripture" and "Christianity and Modern Substitutes" sound quite up to date, given the current debates surrounding justification, that is, the New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision. Parts Three and Four, on "The Task of Christian Scholarship" and "Theological Education," go well together and address matters relevant today. Selection 20, for example, on "The Minister and His Greek Testament," is a much needed plea for the theological seminary to retain what it does well and, not in the name of practicality, to dispense with rigorous training.

Parts Five and Six also comport and all students of American Presbyterian history will be happy to have this material in print on "The Nature and Mission of the Church" and "The Presbyterian Controversy," the former part addressing church controversies ranging from missions to "The New Presbyterian Hymnal," and the latter part focusing on issues like the Auburn Affirmation, the GA Special Commission of 1925, the Re-Organization of

Princeton, and the storm following the rise of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions in 1933. And Machen's views on "Church and Society" and "Christianity and Culture" can be gauged in Parts Seven and Eight. Machen strikes many rightly pitched notes, not being as libertarian nor confining the church by its spirituality as much as some might prefer or fear. Indeed, the essays that treat church and society, or Christianity and culture, address some of the most difficult issues that we continue to face and that require our continuing labor. Machen's contribution helps us achieve a mature, balanced view.

Part Nine contains five important reviews that Machen published on works by Robert E. Speer, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Arthur C. McGiffert, E.Y. Mullins, and Karl Barth. Except for the Mullin's work, which he positively reviews, these show his ability fairly to assess and analyze the views of those opposing orthodoxy. His review of Barth's "theology of crisis" remains instructive and useful. The last section, Part Ten, is autobiographical and contains a wonderful selection, "Christianity in Conflict," that Machen wrote by invitation in 1932 for a volume entitled *Contemporary American Theology*. It evinces Machen's customary humble yet vigorous style and is a delight to read.

I could not but think in reading these refreshing selections how different things are now from the early days of the old Westminster. Some who have followed in Machen's wake at the seminary do not share Machen's unshakable commitment to defending orthodoxy and opposing liberalism in all its forms. I do not believe, by way of a striking contrast, that anyone could honestly come away from anything in this volume wondering what Dr. Machen *really* believed about justification, inspiration and infallibility, the utter necessity and sole sufficiency of the person and work of Christ and a host of other vital matters. The same cannot be said for all who have succeeded Machen, some of whose works leave one wondering whether or not they really believe in the inspiration of God's Word and in the necessity for a divine and supernatural work to understand God's Word rightly. No one could honestly question where J. Gresham Machen stood on any

of the great issues of his day and we are thankful for his faithfulness and clarity.

—Alan D. Strange

F. Gerrit Immink, *Faith: A Practical Theological Reconstruction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. 309. ISBN 0-8028-2793-4 \$32.00.

F. Gerrit Immink, a minister in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, teaches practical theology at Utrecht University. This book is not a traditional systematic analysis of faith, but rather a look at faith from several angles that are important in the subject of practical theology (Christian *praxis*). His accent is on faith as trust in a relationship as well as knowledge, an indispensable element in Christian faith. Faith holds a person together, especially during times of sorrow and distress in life. Says Immink, “Faith is the gift of grace” (73). Then later he adds, “God’s word of promise is the final word” (82).

With faith, two subjects, God and man, come together in this relationship. Immink tries to steer a middle road between Barth’s God-centeredness and Schleiermacher’s and Tillich’s accent on man-centeredness. He also draws our attention to the critical role of institutions and how they transmit faith so that faith is seen in both personal and social dimensions. He discusses the process of salvation and how it is applied to the sinner, and its relationship with salvation history revealed and completed in Christ (102ff.). The traditional *ordo salutis* is described as “the journey God travels with us concerning our living a life of salvation” (107).

Immink interacts with a wide range of voices in the Protestant tradition on both the European and North American continents: Calvin, Barth, Kohlbrugge, J. Edwards, A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck, van Ruler, Henning Luther, H. Berkhof, H. Ridderbos, J. Van der Ven, N. Wolterstorff, and E. Thurneysen, among others. A very extensive bibliography and an index of names and subjects concludes this intriguing study of faith in Christian *praxis*.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, editors. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. xviii + 364. ISBN 0-8010-2674-1 \$39.99 (cloth).

This series of commentaries is intended to attract scholars and non-scholars alike, combining balance with breadth, and depth with concision. It already includes commentaries on Luke (Darrell L. Bock), John (Andreas J. Köstenberger), Romans (Thomas R. Schreiner), 1 Corinthians (David E. Garland), and Revelation (Grant R. Osborne). And now we may add this competent work on 1 Peter.

The author, Karen H. Jobes, is associate professor of New Testament at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. She has written a commentary on Esther and has coauthored with Moisés Silva the volume *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Baker Academic, 2000).

Why yet another commentary on 1 Peter? The author hopes to provide three distinct contributions. First, she offers a new theory on the historical background of the epistle. Second, her commentary supplies the reader with better access to the use of the Septuagint in 1 Peter. Third, using principles of bilingual interference, this commentary frequently evaluates the Greek found in this letter with an eye to possible Semitic influence.

As with any good commentary, this volume's opening discussion of introductory matters (author, date, provenance, audience, etc.) serves subsequent exegetical analysis. With balanced thoroughness in evaluating the options, the author views this epistle as having been written by the apostle Peter or an amanuensis working under his personal direction, before the apostle's death in the mid-60s.

Perhaps the greatest value of this particular commentary on 1 Peter will be the discussion of a theory which seeks to identify the recipients of this letter in terms of a historical reconstruction of the original context in which this letter was written and received. Jobes explains the phenomenon of Roman colonization, particularly under the administration of Emperor Claudius, who

reigned from AD 41–54. This emperor’s rule, we are reminded, was characterized by conquest and expansion, during which time he established Roman cities in all five of the regions named in 1 Peter 1:1. During this period, colonies were established throughout the provinces, a process that involved relocating people who lived in Rome (voluntarily or otherwise) to other regions, including Asia Minor. Moreover, around AD 49, the notorious expulsion from Rome of Jews and Christians occurred under Claudius (Acts 18:2). The Christian believers to whom 1 Peter was originally addressed may have been among those living, by virtue of imperial population policies, without the benefits of citizenship as foreigners in communities whose indigenous residents were hostile and inhospitable.

Naturally, for this theory to be persuasive, it must be able to explain plausibly all the data and implications faced by competing alternatives, and help explain additional features of this particular epistle. It does so quite well. One such question involves when Peter might have been in Rome, such that these relocated readers might have known him personally before their own “dispersion” (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1). The historical evidence neither confirms nor contradicts such an assumption of Peter’s earlier stay in Rome. Moreover, lexical evidence for the use of the Latin word *peregrinus* in connection with citizenship suggests a conceptual connection to the Greek word *παρεπίδημος*, the word used to describe the recipients of the letter (in 1:1). The textured meaning of this metaphor of foreignness and alienation toward one’s surroundings, so prominent especially in this NT epistle, would have unfolded powerfully if its imagery had related to a real event or experience of the original readers. This theory of Roman colonization, Jobs suggests, helps to show how Peter uses his readers’ own sociopolitical circumstances to explain key elements of his message about living the Christian life in a hostile society.

The admitted weakness of this theory is that Peter makes no mention of such an event in his letter—which will leave the hypothesis in the arena of probability. But this plausible historical reconstruction does furnish us with a specific motivation for the

concrete apostolic encouragements and exhortations in the epistle. Underlying the metaphorical-spiritual meaning of these images of pilgrimage and alienation could have been a sociopolitical experience of these early Christian readers.

The value of this commentary on 1 Peter lies, then, in the skill with which the author weaves throughout her exegetical analysis important considerations drawn from documented social and political circumstances of the ancient world. The biblical text is treated with constant sensitivity to this comprehensive historical setting, never forcing an alien interpretation on the text, never allowing the *Sitz im Leben* to determine or restrain the text's meaning or relevance.

At the same time, it seems that far more attention should have been given in the commentary's introduction to a sustained examination of considerations drawn from the covenant background, the semantic fields (in both the MT and the LXX) of key terms and concepts, and the revelational data of the rest of Scripture relating to the sojourning-pilgrim-foreigner metaphor complex.

Within Scripture itself, the patriarch Abraham was the paradigm of the sojourner's lifestyle; he was chosen and called to leave his land and move to another, clinging simply to the divine word of promise. Abraham even described himself as *ἄροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος* (Gen. 23:4 LXX), a sojourner and a foreigner among the resident citizens of Hebron. Moreover, this relationship between God and Abraham had paradigmatic value for the relationship between God and Israel, a people called to remember that they too had once been sojourners in Egypt (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 10:19). The Torah stipulated that the people of Israel show compassion to the sojourners dwelling among them, and placed under a curse anyone who perverted justice toward the sojourner (Deut. 27:19). Abraham's self-description is echoed by the psalmist in Psalm 38:13 LXX (39:13 MT): *παροικος ἐγὼ εἰμι παρὰ σοὶ* [Codex B reads *ἐν τῇ γῆ*] *καὶ παρεπίδημος καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου*, "I am a sojourner with you [or: on the earth] and a foreigner just as all my fathers

were.” In Psalm 119:19 LXX David acknowledged: πάροικος ἐγὼ εἰμι ἐν τῇ γῆ, I am a sojourner on the earth. In fact, Hebrews 11:13 reminds us that those OT believers who lived by faith in God’s promise had by their lives confessed that ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, they were strangers and foreigners on the earth.

My point is this: the nature and implications of the identity of the recipients of 1 Peter can (and should) be understood as much from the OT covenantal-historical background of redemption as from their contemporary *Sitz im Leben*. It must be said that nowhere does this commentary give the impression that the author would disagree with this. In fact, the author acknowledges that the metaphorical-spiritual sense of these terms and images need not exclude some literal sense related to historical circumstances surrounding the letter. The opposite, however, deserves prior emphasis: the literal sociopolitical realities of Roman colonization need not exclude—indeed, can serve to confirm—the metaphorical-spiritual covenant history in which these readers are participating. The author’s plausible historical reconstruction of the recipients’ life situation could be used to illumine a more fulsome examination and exposition of the interrelation of those elements in the OT material relevant to Abraham and Israel as foreigners and sojourners, together with the NT commentary of Hebrews 11:8-19.

Several features of this commentary deserve special mention. The author supplies her own translation of the Greek text (there is no prior orientation to the textual tradition of 1 Peter, however, although significant variants are discussed throughout the commentary). The printed text on the page is very attractive, enhanced by the use of in-text references to sources (author, date, and page), reducing the need for numerous footnotes. Readers are well served by exegetical extended paraphrase-summaries of passages, usually one written to introduce and another to summarize the pericope under consideration. Throughout the volume, Greek and Hebrew words appear in both original script and transliteration.

Treatment of interpretive difficulties and options is usually thorough and up to date, but interacts generally only with English language commentators.

A fine illustration of the exegetical balance and thoroughness is the author's treatment of the notoriously difficult passage about Christ preaching to the spirits in prison (3:18-22). Exceptions to the usual thoroughness, however, occur already at 1:3b, and later at 5:13. In connection with 1:3b, we find no analysis of how the new birth (*ἀναγεννήσας*, 1:3a) is related to Christ's resurrection in terms of the grammatical construction of the phrase *δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν* (1:3b). Later, in connection with 5:13, the author mentions the virtually unanimous agreement among modern exegetes that *ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή* refers to the Christian community in Rome, but omits to evaluate other possibilities, in view of the existence in the ancient world of several cities named Babylon, including a Roman military settlement in Egypt (modern Cairo).

An example of the author's skill in exegeting the syntax of the original Greek is her discussion, at several places (1:13; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:9), of interpreting participles as imperatives. Modern English translations reflect the widely held translational notion that Greek participles often can function as imperatives. To be considered as having imperatival force, such a participle must (1) appear in the nominative case, (2) not be syntactically subordinate to the finite verb, (3) not be part of an elided periphrastic phrase, and (4) stand in an independent clause where one would expect a finite verb. At several points, rather than adopt this recent view, Jobs prefers to understand such participles as having an adverbial function whose imperatival force can be found in the context itself. (One illustration: in 1:13, any imperatival force of the participles *ἀναζωσάμενοι* and *νήφοντες* derives from the imperatival main verb *ἐπίσατε*.)

At one point in the commentary (at 3:1-7), the author pauses to treat the reader to a very helpful interlude concerning "The Significance of Peter's Teaching Today." This pericope provides apostolic instruction about how Christian wives should relate to unbelieving husbands, and about how Christian husbands must

treat their wives. In this context, Jobs makes an important observation that one wishes she could have developed further: “When read within its original historical setting, these verses become a call to social transformation within the Christian community, allowing it to become an alternate society based on God’s redemptive plan” (209). At another place she observes that the Christian community is called to be an alternate society (214). We hope readers will follow her suggestive lead (supplied elsewhere) pointing to the very stimulating essay by Miroslav Volf (“Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter,” *Ex Auditu* 10:15-30). More frequent interludes throughout the commentary (using the very same heading) would make the exposition more useful to pastors and non-scholars in the church.

We encourage pastors and church libraries to investigate purchasing this set of Bible commentaries, including this volume. In light of its balanced discussions and obvious grasp of the message of 1 Peter, we say without hesitation that this particular commentary needed to be written.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hütter, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, editors. *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005. Pp. 336. ISBN 1-58743-151-3 \$39.99 (cloth).

These eighteen essays were penned by scholarly friends (themselves internationally reputable authors) of Stanley Hauerwas, prodigious writer and prominent teacher (the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke University). These pieces are arranged in four sections according to the themes of God, Truth, and Witness, all of which figured prominently in Hauerwas’s 2001 Gifford Lectures, published as *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001).

Several of the essays challenge in a gentle, yet direct manner Hauerwas's views on the relation in Western culture between Christianity and politics. His loud criticisms of Constantinianism and its consequences receive pointed attention in essays by Robert Wilken, Robert Jenson, Tristram Engelhardt, and Robert Bellah.

The list of other writers includes (in order of appearance) Rowan Greer (Augustine's quest for truth), David Burrell (genuine human freedom and belief in a free creator), Hans Reinders (the intellectually disabled), Arne Rasmusson (post-Christendom, Karl Barth, and John Howard Yoder), Emmanuel Katongole (Hauerwas from an African perspective), Bernd Wannewetsch (Christian political theology), George Lindbeck (ecumenism), Neville Richardson (the church in South Africa), Nicholas Lash (the task of theology), Harry Huebner (the Christian university), and Peter Ochs (the inter-Abrahamic study by Christians, Jews, and Muslims).

As with any repartee, one benefits most from this scholarly conversation among friends through some familiarity with the main lines of Hauerwas's work.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Robert Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method: from Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord*. Lutheran Quarterly Books. Paul Rorem, series editor. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. 395. ISBN 0-8028-2922-8 \$35.00.

Questions surrounding soteriology are largely determined by questions surrounding anthropology. And questions of anthropology eventually face the matter of free will, or, more specifically, a complex of issues regarding free or bound choice and divine sovereignty. Robert Kolb's historical study of the problem of free choice in early Lutheran theology sets forth a well-informed examination of primary source materials, along with a clear analysis of the principal players in the Lutheran debates on this question in the sixteenth century. Particularly helpful is the way that Kolb relates this pivotal doctrinal topic to

theological methodology. In part, at least, theological methodology determined how the players sized up the biblical evidence and formulated doctrine.

Naturally, of first interest on this question is Luther's *De servo arbitrio* in response to Erasmus's diatribe *De libero arbitrio*. As Luther saw it, his dispute with Erasmus was neither an intellectual curiosity nor a sidebar debate for hairsplitting theologians; on the contrary, this conflict reached into the soul of the reformation inasmuch as it reached to the heart of the gospel itself. Luther assessed his own contribution to this debate as one of his most important theological works. Many of his Lutheran contemporaries and opponents did not share that assessment. In fact, Kolb demonstrates how early biographers of Luther ignored *De servo arbitrio*. He also traces out Melancthon's theology of human freedom and divine sovereignty, and the contentious disputes that evolved within Lutheranism, ending with the Formula of Concord.

It is beyond the scope of this review to track the contours of Kolb's fine study. But this much should be said: as Kolb takes his readers up the hills and down the valleys of this conflict, one comes away far better acquainted with how the Lutherans struggled to find a consensus theological position over against, say, their Reformed brethren on the continent who spoke with one voice on this topic. Kolb's work shows us that Lutherans were united in wanting to affirm salvation as entirely God's responsibility, while also affirming that humans are wholly responsible agents. Kolb demonstrates that in treating questions surrounding human freedom, the Lutherans could not escape treating and accounting for the doctrine of predestination. I particularly found the Marbach/Zanchi debate in Strasbourg of interest. Kolb shows how theological victories in the sixteenth century are partly won by the actions of governing authorities. In this case, Zanchi was the loser, though the burden of Luther's position was upheld.

Kolb's scholarship is first-rate, his writing is lucid and clear, and his analysis is comprehensive and theologically insightful. This volume will be of interest not only to intellectual historians, but

also to pastors who delight in becoming better informed on major theological themes. Kolb's work on this topic is very likely the best available in the English language.

—J. Mark Beach

Sean Michael Lucas, *Robert Lewis Dabney: A Southeran Presbyterian*. American Reformed Bibliographies. D. G. Hart and Sean Michael Lucas, editors. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2005. Pp. 295. ISBN 0-87552-663-2 \$24.00 (cloth).

This biography is the first volume in the anticipated and welcomed *American Reformed Biographies* series, published by P&R. Dr. Lucas, who wrote this inaugural work, and noted historian D.G. Hart, serve as editors of this series, the aim of which is to revive interest in figures who may have received little attention in more recent years, but who are quite significant in the history of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in America. Lucas teaches church history at Covenant Theological Seminary (St. Louis, MO) and in this biography bears a heavy burden in attempting a "fair and balanced" portrait of R.L. Dabney, who is a challenging subject, having about him both that which is appealing and also that which is unattractive. Lucas, to his credit, pulls it off handily. The book is well-researched, well-written, and always maintains the readers' interest.

This biography is remarkable because Lucas looks straight at Dabney and does not flinch. Lucas's unblinking eye discovers much that is troubling about Dabney. Principally, Dabney supported racism and, especially after the Civil War, appears to have been deeply embittered. Because of these flaws in Dabney, it would be easy to dismiss him altogether. This would, however, be lamentable. While Dabney had significant shortcomings, he also made significant contributions to the church and the wider culture. He was an able and careful theologian who taught several generations of ministers, and was concerned that a seminary be a nursery of piety and confessional fidelity rather than an institution dedicated to "academic freedom." In face of the secularizing

curents of his day, he decried Marxism, Darwinism, heartless corporate capitalism, feminism, and public education.

In addition to Dabney's views of seminary training and his wariness about the dangers of contemporary ideas, Dabney made other important contributions. He insisted on a rigorously trained, educated ministry at a time when the rate of national expansion rendered such a commitment difficult. He also stood against centralization, both in state and church; in the latter case, arguing that seminaries should be locally controlled and financed, perhaps under the control of the synod.

In classroom teaching, as well as his writings, the otherwise trenchant Dabney was something of a moderate. He based his lectures on Turretin's *Elenctic Theology* (as did Hodge, though Thornwell based his on Calvin's *Institutes*) but departed from Turretin's federal view of the imputation of Adam's sin, arguing that the Scriptures were unclear on precisely how Adam's sin was transmitted to his progeny. He also regarded the infra/supralapsarian question as overly speculative.

Lucas treats Dabney with equity in the matter of epistemology. Dabney was, as were most of his fellow Southern theologians, together with the Princetonians, a partisan of Scottish Common Sense Realism (SCSR) of the Thomas Reid variety. This position, especially among Van Tilians (and I count myself as one), has been unfairly ridiculed. While SCSR remains epistemologically naïve, particularly in the wake of modernism and post-modernism, it is not as bad as it may first appear to a presuppositionalist, especially when one clearly understands the appeal made by SCSR to *right* reason. Every Calvinist knows that fallen, unregenerate man, when acting consistently with his own presuppositions, fails to exercise right reason: there is an antithesis between the city of God and the city of this world that renders man in his rebellion irrational. Presuppositionalists insist that unbelievers *in principle* know nothing rightly, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. Because of common grace, however, the antithesis is not as sharp in practice as it is in principle. Unbelievers do not live with full unbelieving consistency and thus may know many things, in a measure, that in principle they have no right to know. Lucas goes

out of his way at several points, it seems to me, to show the correspondence between a more presuppositionalist approach and Dabney's, almost as if Dabney enjoyed an incipient or nascent presuppositionalism, though he clearly embraced SCSR.

Lucas examines Dabney honestly in the area of his greatest weakness: Dabney's views on slavery and his attitude toward African Americans and the black race. Lucas rightly finds him sadly wanting on both counts. It is particularly lamentable that—even after the Civil War—Dabney remained adamantly opposed to any “mixing of the races,” even in the churches, believing that blacks were constitutionally incapable of being office-bearers and would remain in every respect inferior to their white brothers. For those who defend Dabney as merely a creature of his time or who would assert that we could expect no better from a proud Southerner subjected to the manifest indignities of Reconstruction, Lucas contrasts Dabney to his fellow Southerners, John Girardeau and Thomas Peck, both of whom rejected Dabney's segregationism, with Girardeau particularly active in ministering among blacks.

Other reviewers have critiqued Lucas for what one refers to as a “psychologizing tendency that riddles portions of the book” (*Confessional Presbyterian*, 2006, p. 174). Cited as an example of this concern is Lucas's speculation that Dabney's “penchant for order” can be understood by his dislike of disorder in the family, stemming from his own “fatherless upbringing during his key intellectual years” (34). The criticism here is that a number of more prosaic factors might explain Dabney's propensity for precision without resorting to “he was a fatherless boy” psychologizing. I think that Lucas persuasively and insightfully makes the case for the relevance of these psychological factors in Dabney's makeup. Lucas does not reduce Dabney's desire for order to this psychological factor or absolutize the psychological, reading everything about Dabney through that lens. Rather, Lucas rightly sees the psychological aspect as an important factor in Dabney's constitution.

Similarly, Lucas is criticized for his depiction of Dabney's war time activities. Lucas does adopt an “honor” model through which

he sees Dabney as a “man struggling to maintain his manly honor” (*Conf. Pres.*, 174). Because he lacked front line involvement, Dabney sought “to rationalize his avoidance of the war” (129) in order to reclaim his manhood and honor. Critics of Lucas’s analysis here score points. Given a number of factors, including Stonewall Jackson’s high commendation of Dabney, it is questionable whether Dabney struggled with dishonor as Lucas suggests. It is the case, though, that Dabney was deeply embittered after the War, openly despising the Northern states as well as the Northern church, and resenting all the depredations that he saw the South suffering at the hands of “Yankees.” Did a sense of dishonor both in and after the War prompt him to feel that he needed, in some way, to continue to fight the war? Dabney is certainly a stark contrast to Robert E. Lee, who was remarkably large-hearted toward Northerners. To be sure, Dabney was deeply hurt by the loss of Southern culture and the harshness of Reconstruction, but one may well wonder whether these factors are sufficient to explain the depth of his post-War bitterness. Any biographer of Dabney would be hard put to explain why this otherwise gracious Christian man acted with such vitriol towards all things Northern as well as towards the black race.

Lucas has, all things considered, provided us with a powerful and evocative study of the life of this significant American religious figure. He shows the good Dabney did without hiding the bad so we can better mine the jewels that are to be found by those who study Dabney. We look forward to more contributions from the volumes to be produced in this promising series.

—Alan D. Strange

Victor H. Matthews, *Old Testament Turning Points: The Narratives That Shaped a Nation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. 208. ISBN 0-8010-2774-8 \$18.99.

Victor Matthews serves as a professor of religious studies and associate dean of the College of Humanities and Public Affairs at

Missouri State University. His previous writings have often been devoted to the cultural and historical world of the ancient Near East (e.g., *The Social World of Ancient Israel, Old Testament Parallels*). And in this book Matthews provides a helpful survey of those historical moments in Old Testament history that serve as watershed events as a new direction is taken in the revelational and redemptive history of God and his people.

Matthews focuses on the following eight events in eight chapters: Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden; Yahweh establishes a covenant with Abraham; Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt (leading to the covenant at Sinai); King David makes Jerusalem his capital (leading to the Davidic covenant and the development of “Zion theology”); Jeroboam leads the secession of the northern tribes; Samaria falls to the Assyrians; Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and deports the people of Judah; and, finally, Cyrus captures Babylon, and the exiles return home. Matthews has correctly focused on those critical transition moments in redemptive history.

The first chapter analyzes the story of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Matthews divides his discussion into five “themes and influences”: the themes of utopia, etiology, wisdom, gift-giving, and return (21). These themes are defined and described and then traced out in the rest of the Old Testament text. Eden is an idyllic place whose true “ownership and sovereignty” belong alone to God (p. 22). Eden provides an etiology (explanation of origin) of why humans are mortal. The first human pair has access to the Tree of Life, but they choose for the Tree of Knowledge. In reaching for knowledge Adam and Eve demonstrate that they are not suited for Eden. Furthermore, Matthew ties in the notion of gift-giving with the human pair’s life in the Garden. While gift-giving is an integral part of the ancient Near East, there is really nothing that the human pair can give to God to repay him for the gift of life. At the same time, since Adam and Eve are guests in God’s Garden-Home, their behavior is unacceptable, and they must then be expelled. They are curious, something that belongs to humanity, and such curiosity “demanded that they be awakened to their destiny, which was not

in Eden” (32). Matthews rounds out this chapter by tracing the return theme, in which the latter prophets portray in their eschatological and apocalyptic writings when Edenic conditions will be restored, and God’s people will be able to return to it. The “promised land” of history becomes “Paradise restored.”

Matthews offers much that is helpful, if not altogether new, in his discussion. He shows himself very conversant in the comparative literature of the ancient Near East, as he touches base with creation and wisdom accounts from Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature. One glaring omission, however, concerns the covenantal nature of the pre-fall situation of Adam and Eve. Matthews does not sufficiently draw in the reality of God’s punishment of death upon sin. Romans 5, with its contrast between the role of the first Adam and the importance of the second Adam, is not developed. Indeed, tying in these important turning points of Old Testament revelation with fulfillment in the New Testament is virtually missing (see the index to note how little reference is made to the New Testament).

In his tracing out of the covenant with Abraham, Matthews underscores hospitality as a key element in demonstrating Abraham’s worthiness in receiving commendation from God. This is not usually highlighted in discussions about Abraham’s role in Israel’s history.

Throughout the book there are many sidebars that set forth a sampling of biblical passages or related material from extra-biblical texts to illustrate a variety of themes and motifs that the author is discussing. This kind of cross-referencing is helpful in tying various portions of the Scriptural history and text together, thus enabling the reader to keep the “bigger picture” of a broader cultural, historical, and political milieu before him, albeit in an abbreviated way. The sidebars with Scriptural references are particularly useful in helping the reader see how many portions of the Old Testament are connected.

One element in Matthews’ survey that greatly distracts from his work is the fact that he is prepared to question the historical accuracy of the biblical narrative. In several places we encounter statements to the effect that the biblical writer may have created a

portion of the text in order to editorialize in favor of a particular theological stance. Some examples may suffice. He describes the Deuteronomistic Historian as providing “somewhat exaggerated and biased portrayals” of Israel’s kings (103). While no one would argue that the Scripture gives mere reporting of neutral facts, the “bias” of the writer is also that of the Holy Spirit. Matthews also sees the “Judges cycle” in Judges 3-6 as an “editorial creation of the Deuteronomistic Historian” (133). The account of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19; Isa. 36-38) is described as “probably a Deuteronomistic addition intended to provide a more theological explanation of these events” (139). The inspired writer is speaking from a perspective in order to drive home a point, but fictional history is not created in order to make said point. This does not appear to be Matthews’ view.

In addition, Matthews dates Deuteronomy in the seventh-century B.C. (cf. p. 140), which is a commonplace in biblical studies, but is a position that does not accord with the testimony of Scripture itself. On page 76, he refers to the “lower courts” of the monarchy and the corresponding mandate in the Torah, which he describes as an etiology: “It is quite likely that all these passages, as well as the appeals system outlined in Deuteronomy 17:8-13, are retrojections of judicial institutions that existed during the monarchic period....”

Several other curious views emerge in Matthews’ work. He sees David’s “hiding” of the ark of the covenant as a way to keep the people’s focus on David and not be distracted by the cult object (90ff.). He also describes Ruth in Bethlehem as having to “to struggle to be accepted by her adopted community” (179). No doubt gleaning is hard work, but Ruth 2-4 reveal that Boaz and the “entire gate” of his people receive Ruth favorably.

A very helpful feature of this book that students beginning the study of Old Testament biblical theology can appreciate is a glossary of terms at the end of the book. Too often students in biblical studies may encounter a vocabulary that is new to them, and such a glossary helps them to break into the literature. Matthews includes a Scripture index and an index of important

subjects at the end of his book. Despite the above critical comments, this book can, in general, be read with profit.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Stephen J. Nichols, *J. Gresham Machen: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2004. Pp. 252. ISBN 0-87552-620-9 \$14.99. D. G. Hart, editor. *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2004. Pp. 252. ISBN 0-87552-570-9 \$39.99 (cloth).

This is not the first of these “guided tours” to be offered by P&R Publications. Nor is this the first volume in this series that Stephen Nichols has written: he wrote the one on Jonathan Edwards (reviewed, *MJT* 13 (2002), 216-221) and on Martin Luther. On the whole, the works in this series are helpful and highly recommended, furnishing a particularly clear and concise introduction to their various subjects. Nichols on Machen is an excellent addition to this series and makes Machen “more accessible” both to novitiates and veterans of Machen, as D.G. Hart writes in commending it. I would especially recommend this book to readers who know little or nothing about Machen and wish to be oriented to his life and significance.

Nichols employs a straightforward method in describing Machen’s life and writings: Part 1 presents a basic biography, in three parts, spanning Machen’s life (1881-1937); the remainder of the book deals with Machen as a scholar (Part 2), as a citizen (Part 3), and as a churchman (Part 4). His notes on the sources, with which he concludes each chapter, are helpful, as is his “Select Guide to Books by and about J.Gresham Machen” and the bibliography at the end of the work.

After the concise biographical treatment of Machen in Part 1, Nichols sets forth the substance of Machen’s scholarship in Part 2, beginning with an examination of Machen’s most popular work, his matchless *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923). The remarkable freshness in this work comes from Machen’s insistence that Christianity is a doctrine that leads to a life and not doctrine

developed out of our experience, and thus rendered temporally variable. Contra Liberalism, Christianity does not tell us how to be good so that we may be saved. Rather, Christianity teaches us that we are wicked—helpless, hopeless, doomed, damned—and that only One was good enough to merit the eternal life that we have forfeited in Adam. Christianity alone proclaims Christ, by whose active and passive obedience, not ours, we are saved. This message of salvation in Christ and in Him alone is as relevant and needed as ever. And it is also imperiled by the current crises in the Reformed churches—over the New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision—as it was by Liberalism in Machen’s time.

Similarly, in *What is Faith?* (1925), Machen never reduces faith to the merely intellectual, refusing to evacuate saving faith of its intellectual content. The movement afoot to redefine faith as trust alone, rather than consisting of knowledge, assent, and trust—the traditional Reformed definition of faith—may have something in common with Schleiermacher’s definition of faith as a “feeling of dependence,” but not with Machen’s classical Reformed understanding of faith. Machen resisted the liberal removal of the ratiocinative element from faith, even as we today must resist those who would redefine faith as a feeling of trust or dependence, like a little child to its father, without the knowledge of the gospel that must be present in true saving faith.

And finally, in Part 2, Nichols examines Machen’s two greatest works of scholarship: *The Origins of Paul’s Religion* (1921) and *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (1930). Machen took on the biblical critics who argued that Paul deified the simple Jewish carpenter who may have been a charismatic teacher but was not God. Critics today of the Word and of our Lord’s divinity have popularized their unbelief in works like *The Da Vinci Code* that seek to argue that the canonical Scriptures conceal the truth about Jesus that is revealed in extra-biblical material like the Gospel of Thomas and other Gnostic impostures. (A number of fine works and websites, it may be noted, are available to answer Dan Brown’s best-seller. I would particularly recommend [www.thetruthaboutdavinci.com](http://www.thetruthaboutdavinci.com).) The virgin birth is necessary, of course, for our Lord to have been conceived by the Holy Spirit and thus for him to be,

God with us. When liberalism took aim at the virgin birth, Machen made a full court press and defended it masterfully.

Parts 3 and 4 set forth Machen as a citizen and a churchman. Nichols, under the rubric of Machen as citizen, deals with Machen on culture, politics, the environment (Machen was a great lover of mountains, hiking, etc.), and education. Machen is always thoughtful in these areas even if one disagrees with him here or there. Nichols then surveys Machen as a churchman by briefly reprising the great ecclesiastical controversies of the 1920s and 1930s, concluding this section with some sermon selections from Machen that wonderfully set forth the heart of Machen's gospel proclamation.

We continue to thank God for raising up J. Gresham Machen at a time when the enemy was coming in like a flood. We are also grateful that Nichols has furnished us with such a fine introduction to the life and work of this twentieth-century stalwart of the faith. May many be encouraged to fight the good fight of faith, as Dr. Machen so unflinchingly fought. Perhaps Nichol's work might serve as suitable enlistment material in this glorious cause of contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Every generation must fight and may God give to those of us who remain below in the church militant, hearts for the fight, until we join the church triumphant.

—Alan D. Strange

Mark H. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?: An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. 272. ISBN 0-8010-2797-7 \$24.99 (cloth).

Mark Noll is one of America's best church historians and has particularly distinguished himself as a student of Christianity in America. He has taught since 1978 at Wheaton College and was recently named to the chair in history that has been held by George Marsden at the University of Notre Dame. The other author of this volume, Carolyn Nystrom, has written scores of

books, many of them for children, and has also co-authored several books with J. I. Packer.

It should be noted that Noll, for his part, has proven himself to be a sensitive interpreter of American church history, paying special attention to the political, social, and cultural aspects of church history and the ways in which the church in America has assumed a particularly American character. He has not always been, however, as attentive to the significance of theology itself in the life of the church. His less explicitly theological approach can be seen, for instance, in his *America's God*, especially as one considers that work over against a work like E. Brooks Holifield's *Theology in America*, which is heavily theological in its analysis of American religion.

What I mean by Noll's less explicitly theological approach is not that Noll lacks understanding of or fails to address theology altogether, but that he seems at times to accord greater weight to factors other than theology in his reading of American church history. The weight and emphasis that Noll gives to factors other than the theological one sometimes raises the broader question of the importance he places on theology and detailed theological battles in the life of the church. Not a few historians, for instance, view the theological battles of the fourth and fifth centuries, culminating in the four great ecumenical councils, more from a sociological point of view than a theological one. To be sure, the controversy between the Arians and Athanasius involved more than theology. Theology was at its very heart, however, and any historian who marginalizes theology in his treatment of the ecumenical councils misses the core of the controversy. We do not expect historians writing from a secularized, anti-supernatural perspective to accord much weight to theology, which, though it may be thought to reveal much about various things in the lives of those under consideration, is ultimately, for such secularists, much ado about nothing. This is not, of course, Noll's position, and for that reason we could wish that he accorded greater weight to matters theological in his historical analysis. That is particularly the case in the book now under review.

It is perhaps noteworthy that Noll and Nystrom carry out their project more as a historian and a journalist than as historical theologians. I make this observation inasmuch as the authors downplay the significance of the theological differences that have long existed between Roman Catholic and Protestants, and this proves to quite problematic. If the gospel is still at stake in the dispute between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, to emphasize other factors at the expense of the theological is to miss the heart of the dispute. As so many in our ecumenically-focused era, Noll and Nystrom seem to embrace a “mere Christianity” approach to matters theological and, since Rome and Protestants agree on so much in this regard, the authors apparently believe that for one to continue to insist that the theological differences between the two are very important is to succumb to obscurantism and a doctrinalism that is out of step with the modern *Zeitgeist*.

Noll and Nystrom begin their work by noting that “things are not the way they used to be” (17), specifically, relations between Roman Catholics and Protestant evangelicals are no longer as tense as they were, as recently as the election of John F. Kennedy. Former presidential candidate Gary Bauer reflected on this significant shift in attitudes in an interview at the time of the 2004 presidential election: “When John F. Kennedy made his famous speech that the Vatican would not tell him what to do, evangelicals and Southern Baptists breathed a sigh of relief. But today evangelicals and Southern Baptists are hoping that the Vatican *will* tell Catholic politicians what to do” (20). Why this sea-change? An increasingly secularized culture, as well as a more Protestant-friendly post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church (RCC), has prompted both sides to seek and recognize that they now enjoy much common ground.

Billy Graham is a good bell-weather of this change. In the 1940s through the mid-1960s, Graham permitted no involvement of Roman Catholic priests in his crusades. Nor did priests seek or want any involvement. Now the RCC is involved with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). Graham has moved from a more distinctly evangelical and fundamentalist approach to

a broader “mere-Christianity” one and, in so doing, has found the RCC to be more congenial than he earlier believed. That this is the case highlights that whatever changes may have occurred in the RCC as a result of Vatican II and its aftermath—certainly we have witnessed after Vatican II a more ecumenical RCC, open to a host of external influences, including Protestantism and the world religions—seismic changes have occurred within Protestant evangelicalism, moving it away from its earlier non-negotiable doctrinal commitments to a stance more “open” to a host of belief-systems, including the RCC. The redefining of evangelicalism that we have witnessed in the last few decades is another book and not the one that Noll and Nystrom are writing here. The new coziness between Roman Catholics and evangelicals could never have occurred, however, without evangelicalism being transformed and the kind of reconfiguration that we see in the BGEA in the 1960s is a significant part, along with many other such changes, of the re-shaping of evangelicalism in its new ecumenical mold.

Why this rapprochement between Roman Catholics and evangelicals? It is not, it should be noted, because Rome has repudiated its anathemas against Protestantism and has embraced the solas of the Reformation. Rome continues, in its recent *Catechism*, and even in its concordat with the Lutheran World Federation, to insist that baptism bestows initial justification upon the subject baptized and that one enjoys final justification if—and only if—one is fully sanctified, which most would not experience in this life but in purgatory. All the sanctifying grace that one needs is bestowed *ex opere operato* by the sacerdotal agency of the church. Rome thus teaches that the church holds out salvation for those who persevere to the end, which perseverance is secured both by God’s grace and also by the will and work of the believer, at least in some measure. For Rome, man is not totally depraved and grace is not irresistible, not to mention Rome’s take on the other three points addressed by Dort. Noll and Nystrom note at several points that while Calvinism may continue to have these sharper differences with Rome, the Reformed faith would also have such differences with Arminian evangelicalism. This is doubtless true, but only highlights the truly non-evangelical

nature of any evangelicalism that is not Reformed. C. H. Spurgeon was right that soteriological Calvinism, as expressed in the five points, is but a nickname for the gospel. Older evangelicalism, and evangelicalism to this day in other parts of the world, is coterminous with being Reformed, or at least classically Protestant.

The reason for the rapprochement between Roman Catholics and evangelicals is the current of the times. In a world in which atheistic modernism, liberalism, and post-modernism reign, and which is also threatened by militant Islam, many Roman Catholics and evangelicals believe that they can no longer afford alienation. Even among Roman Catholics and evangelicals who have not changed much in recent years and retain many of their older theological convictions, considerations of these societal shifts prompt a closer alliance. So the combination of secularization and doctrinal downgrade—with many Roman Catholics and evangelicals increasingly knowing and caring little about doctrine—has created the coalition of Roman Catholics and evangelicals that we now witness. Francis Schaefer had called for co-belligerency between Roman Catholics and evangelicals in matters pertaining to public policy on which each shared common ground as part of a broader Christian heritage; he did not envision, or desire, however, the kind of theological or ecclesiastical cooperation that we now commonly see and that Noll and Nystrom discuss in this book. In an era such as ours, whose chief desideratum is ecumenicity, perhaps at any price, evangelicals have embraced “mere Christianity” and have jumped on the bandwagon that liberals have been riding the whole century: thus evangelicals now seek closer ties with a Rome that has changed in tone (Vatican II) but remains fixed in anti-Protestant doctrine (Trent and Vatican I).

Noll and Nystrom proceed to contrast the “better days” that Roman Catholics and evangelicals now enjoy with the way things used to be. The authors trace the hostility between Protestants and the RCC to the historic roots with which we are all familiar (40 ff.) and then move forward. They examine that history, particularly in America, in which they survey eighteenth and

nineteenth century antipathy between Roman Catholics and Protestants. They tend to treat American Protestantism, particularly with its being the majority view, as narrow, bigoted, and partisan, especially with respect to the minority Roman Catholic view. At Noll's and Nystrom's hands, Protestantism is depicted as suffering from a kind of religious prejudice against other faith traditions, which now, thankfully, at least in a measure, we have begun to overcome. Noll and Nystrom downplay the fact that before Vatican II, Rome not only dismissed Protestantism altogether, but spoke vigorously against a whole host of civil, economic, religious and other liberties that America in particular sought to embody and to which Protestants were generally committed. Pope Pius IX, for instance, condemned not only naturalism, and many other genuine ills, like rationalism, socialism, and communism, in his *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), but he also condemned Bible study and many other concomitants of Protestantism, including many of the elements of republican government. When Rome continued to support absolutism, both in the government of church and state, it is hardly surprising to find the RCC opposed in many places in the West, particularly in the United States.

In more recent times, the Pope has been quite positive about many features of American, as well as broader Western, democracy; but not in the nineteenth century, and, because of that, many Americans naturally viewed Rome as an "enemy." Noll and Nystrom tend, as noted above, to downplay (at least they do in chapter 2), the fact that the papacy was viewed warily because for so many years it opposed capitalism across the board, all sorts of freedoms (of press, of speech, of religious affiliation), and seemed almost unquestionably to support many of the worst features of the *ancien regime*. Noll and Nystrom do acknowledge in chapters 7-8 some of these factors as contributing to why Rome was seen as the great foe of liberty by Protestants in America. They also question, fairly enough, whether the divide on these issues was ever as great as all sides imagined and points out that subsequent events, particularly the secularization of American

culture, has called even more sharply into question how divided Protestants and Roman Catholics really are, or should be.

That there was, on these shores, as well as in Protestant strongholds in Europe, much unwonted prejudice against the RCC, is hardly to be denied. It is the case that the majority religion often oppresses and even tyrannizes other religions that are in the minority. This happens today in some countries, especially in Latin America, where Rome is still in the ascendancy, and several people that I know from such countries have commented that these authors' sanguine view of a beneficent RCC is quite parochial: Noll's and Nystrom's sense that the RCC is tolerant and desirous of good relations with all churches is a North-American, but not necessarily a world-wide, experience.

If more recent events have taught us all that we enjoy greater common ground in the Western church than we previously recognized, at least with respect to matters social, cultural, and political, this does not mean that we should be unduly critical of our American Protestant forebears for failing to affirm such in their day, particularly before America was secularized as much as it is now and when the papacy openly appeared as a foe to the American experiment, which, rightly or wrongly, Protestants identified with their own cause.

Noll and Nystrom, in chapter 3, discuss why things changed, surveying changes within the RCC, world Christianity, American politics and society, and evangelicalism itself. They proceed in chapter 4 to discuss how all these changes have led, in the last few decades, to a series of ecumenical dialogues between the RCC and a wide range of other bodies (including world religions, which the authors downplay), addressing also the topics of discussion among them. This chapter provides an excellent thumbnail sketch of these discussions for anyone desiring a brief reprise. While they touch on the dialog with evangelicals in Chapter 4, they reserves their most complete discussion of the state of affairs between Roman Catholics and evangelicals for chapter 6, which is exclusively on "evangelicals and Catholics together" (ECT). They look at ECT I-IV, as well as a number of the leading figures involved in these agreements, all for the purpose of highlighting

what Noll and Nystrom distinctly regard as ecumenical accomplishments.

In Chapter 5, Noll and Nystrom set forth the new *Catholic Catechism* that was published in English in 1994. While they certainly point out the classical differences between the RCC and the Protestants, they chiefly glory in the commonality of the two. Of course, the Western church has much in common, particularly in terms of the doctrines of God and of Christ. Both rejoice in Augustine and Anselm and all that they, along with Athanasius, Irenaeus, and others, gave the church. Noll and Nystrom also seem, curiously, to downplay the vibrant confessionalism that remains in many branches of the Protestant church and to overplay that the Catholic Catechism “is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church” (116). Noll and Nystrom present the Catholic Catechism as if there is nothing like it for completeness, and Protestant confessionalism comes off rather poorly in comparison to it, at least as far as its comprehensive and pastoral tone are concerned.

This leaves unanswered whether the document, particularly at the points in which it continues to differ from Protestantism, is biblically and theologically correct. The authors’ encomium to the Catholic Catechism also leaves unanswered the question, which Noll and Nystrom as much admit, of how much latitude the magisterium allows in its enforcement of doctrinal purity, especially given the length of the Catechism. Better to have a shorter confession/catechism to which the church closely adheres, and to which she holds her office-bearers, than to have such a large, unwieldy document (the Catholic Catechism is 756 pages) that is quite loosely enforced. Better yet to have secondary standards that are truly secondary to the Word and that faithfully, accurately, and concisely set forth what the Word teaches. What Noll and Nystrom miss here, as elsewhere—or else simply refuse to acknowledge—is that what has always been at issue between the RCC and Protestants are not those places on which we agree but rather those points on which we differ. Faithful Protestant evangelicals regard justification by faith alone as crucial, a doctrine

which continues to divide the RCC and evangelicals, and a teaching for which some of us are still willing to contend.

That some evangelicals still believe there are issues worth fighting for is part of Noll's and Nystrom's focus in Chapter 7, in which they gauge Protestant reaction to the more recent interactions with Rome and see them as ranging along a spectrum of what they call antagonists on the one end to converts on the other, with critics and partners falling in between. This chapter, while showing that there are still those who glory in the Reformation and who have no intention of going "home to Rome," shows that there are altogether too many Protestants who are too cozy with Rome. So much so that some—like Thomas Howard, Peter Kreeft, Scott and Kimberly Hahn, and others—have converted and become Roman Catholic.

Finally, in the last chapter, Noll and Nystrom turn more specifically to their title question: "Is the Reformation Over?" As to the question of justification by faith (Noll and Nystrom conveniently ignore the formulary always employed by the Reformers—justification by faith *alone*), the authors conclude, "on the substance of what is actually taught about God's saving work in the world, if not always on the exact terminology used to describe that saving work, many evangelicals and Catholics believe close to the same thing." Noll and Nystrom flatly assert that the RCC and evangelicals believe "close to the same thing" when it comes to salvation. They had earlier described this newly minted agreement on salvation as reducible to two propositions: "(1) Salvation is an absolutely free gift from God. (2) There is no Christian salvation that is not manifest in good works." The first of these propositions is broadly Augustinian, ignoring the specifically Protestant conviction that justification is an act, not a process, in which God remits sin and imputes the righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone. Luther's "discovery" was that what God requires of us, but that we can never produce (perfect righteousness), God gives freely as a gift in justification. Justification "doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation" (WLC 77). The second proposition listed by

Noll and Nystrom is affirmed by all except some varieties of antinomianism. Thus these two propositions do not, even when taken together, amount to agreement on the doctrine of justification by faith, as Noll and Nystrom claim that they do (232).

The first proposition, furthermore, does not address the question, “wherein do justification and sanctification differ?” which is the heart and genius of the Protestant Reformation. Insofar as this distinction is ignored, the heart of the matter remains unaddressed. Even apart from the failure of the first proposition to address the distinctiveness of justification, I do not concede that the RCC is purely Augustinian, which it must be to affirm the utter freeness of salvation, as does the first proposition. These sorts of “quibbles” notwithstanding, Noll and Nystrom see agreement on these two broad points as meaning, as they put it, that in regards to justification as the article on which the church stands or falls, “the Reformation is over” (232). They never tell us how they get from the broad statement of proposition 1—salvation is an absolutely free gift from God—to the particulars of the Protestant doctrine of justification (and proposition two is not relevant to the specific question of justification by faith alone). But never mind. It’s close enough for them and other partisans of “mere Christianity” and thus, on this score, “the Reformation is over.”

Perhaps the Reformation is not quite over yet, however, Noll and Nystrom demur. After all, continuing disagreement does remain in what they term “questions of the church” (233). These remaining “questions,” or areas of disagreement include, but are not necessarily limited to, the papacy and the magisterium, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the sacraments, and clerical celibacy. Even having said that, though, Noll and Nystrom then say, “In sum, the central difference that continues to separate evangelicals and Catholics is not Scripture, justification by faith, the pope, Mary, the sacraments, or clerical celibacy—though the central difference is reflected in differences on these matters—but the nature of the church” (237). The difference, then, all comes down to the ecclesial. Noll and Nystrom continue, “For Catholics, the visible,

properly constituted, and hierarchically governed church is the principal God-ordained agent for the work of apostolic ministry. For evangelicals, the church is the body of Christ made up of all those who have responded to the apostolic proclamation of the God-given offer of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ” (237). While I would take issue with this latter “evangelical” definition of the church from a Reformed viewpoint, that Noll and Nystrom permit the whole of the Roman Catholic and Protestant dispute to be reduced to “the nature of the church” is a remarkable concession to Rome.

If, as for Noll and Nystrom, the real continuing divide between Rome and Protestantism is not soteriology but ecclesiology, then Rome triumphs. It is true that for Rome, ecclesiology swallows soteriology. For them, the doctrine of the church is all-encompassing. In the Roman schema, much ultimately comes under the rubric of “church” that we might place elsewhere in the loci of systematic theology. The Protestant Reformation had crucial insights, particularly in regard to anthropology, soteriology, and pneumatology, that qualified and shaped its ecclesiology. Rome, in the Counter-Reformation, insisted that the Roman church retain her primacy, both anathematizing Protestant doctrine and relegating its primary concerns subsidiary to the doctrine of the church. Rome said, in effect, “it’s all about the church and submission to her.” To say, then, as do Noll and Nystrom, that it’s all about ecclesiology is, in an essential matter, to agree with Rome and to allow the whole discussion to be put on Rome’s terms.

Protestants do not agree that it’s all about ecclesiology but that it’s all about theology as a whole—particularly about God in Christ bringing his people to salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit, all to God’s glory—lived out in the context of the church. All, however, is not to be reduced thereby to ecclesiology; by doing so, Noll and Nystrom place the whole of the controversy between Rome and Protestantism on terms that allow Rome to prevail. If there is nothing more important than the external, organized, institutional church as the vehicle for our salvation, as Rome claims and teaches, then all that calls itself church but is not

organized as a hierarchical world church, as is Rome, must give way to the Roman church, since their external organization manifestly trumps all others. But the claim of Protestantism has always been that what makes the church the church is the faithful proclamation of the truth, among other things, and lacking those marks of the true church, Rome may enjoy the institutional form of the church, but she does not enjoy, as an institution, the spiritual life of the church formed by the Word and other marks.

Noll and Nystrom then ask why these fundamental differences over the nature of the church exist (240). Their answer to this takes us back to our beginning observations of his failure to see the theological as important a factor as the historical or the sociological. They explicitly say that they see the factors still making for division between Protestant and Roman Catholic as historical and missiological, preferring to adopt those approaches to understanding the difference “rather than a strictly doctrinal approach to the questions of what Christianity is in its essence” (241). I agree that a host of cultural, linguistic, sociological, and other factors are vital to understanding the shape of Christianity through the centuries. But Christianity, in all of its forms or expressions, can never be reduced to this, as Noll and Nystrom seem to do in the concluding pages (240-251). On this view, there is Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism because of a whole host of differences between the Greek world and the Latin world. Those cultural and linguistic differences certainly contributed to the split of the church in 1054 but there were also real theological differences that had developed between the Augustinian West and the mystical East. All differences within the major historic branches of the church may not be reduced to such factors, exclusive of the question of right doctrine and which church believes it. Given Noll’s and Nystrom’s approach, which is not to see the essence of Christianity as necessarily doctrinal, we are left with historicism: Christianity is not, at its heart, about the truth that is universal in and for all times and places, but about culturally conditioned expressions of it. It is not surprising to read a historian who sounds like Hegel. It is disappointing to read Noll and Nystrom sounding like a German historicist.

The difference between Rome and Protestantism, however, is not, as Noll and Nystrom would have it, merely one of different Christian traditions serving as different languages (244). Rome has one way of salvation, as described above, and classic Protestantism another, as also described above. And they cannot both be right. Now it may be true that for contemporary evangelicalism these soteriological differences no longer make a difference. Ministers still meet with opposition from elders and parishioners if they criticise Roman Catholics and their theology. Many evangelicals seem quite ready on that score to say that the Reformation is over or perhaps should never have happened. Noll and Nystrom are too sophisticated to affirm the latter given all the kinds of historical conditions that brought it about and caused Rome ultimately to profit from it. They do not outright affirm the former either, though it seems clear that they wish that, even if the Reformation is not over, Roman Catholics and evangelicals particularly, would learn to make more and more common cause on every front. Such unity, however, may never be purchased at the price of purity. Rome remains besotted with a number of theological errors, not the least being her denial of justification by faith alone, which remains the article on which the church stands or falls. The vital need of the hour is not reunion with Rome but recovery of the clarity of the gospel as the Reformers preached it and as it is embodied in our confessions and catechisms. Evangelical fuzziness is not commendable but lamentable, and if we would do Rome the most good, we should seek to hold forth the pure gospel in all its power, undimmed by Rome's errors, which gospel is alone fitted for the eternal welfare of us all.

—Alan D. Strange

Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005. ISBN 1-58743-094-0 \$29.99 (cloth).

The author of this Bible commentary needs no introduction to students of Christian thought and history. Jaroslav Pelikan (1923-

2006) was the past president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Sterling Professor Emeritus of History at Yale University. He served as editor of the religion section of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and received honorary degrees from forty-two universities throughout the world. His prodigious writing concentrated on the history of Christian dogma, culminating in the magnificent four-volume collaborative effort, *Creeks and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (Yale University Press, 2003).

In light of his professional field of expertise, then, what may require some explanation is his authoring of a commentary in the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible series. In this review, we will (1) explain the approach to biblical interpretation being followed in this commentary series, (2) provide an overview of this particular commentary on Acts as the initial volume in this series, and (3) offer an evaluation of both.

The series preface presents a bold and provocative apology for its approach: “This series of biblical commentaries was born out of the conviction that dogma clarifies rather than obscures. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible advances upon the assumption that the Nicene tradition, in all its diversity and controversy, provides the proper basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture” (13-14). This new series belongs to that genre of exegesis known as theological interpretation.

Premodern (also called precritical or pre-Enlightenment) interpreters assumed that biblical interpretation is an ecclesial project richly textured by the church’s creedal tradition. Think, for example, of the exegetical labor in the Reformation period, of Luther, Melancthon, Bullinger, Calvin, and Zwingli. The person and work of Jesus Christ, serving the glory and sovereignty of God, undergirding justification by faith alone—all these doctrinal truths supplied the theological threads unifying Scripture and its interpretation.

From the Enlightenment arose the modern consensus that classical Christian doctrine distorts interpretive understanding. As a result, the atomistic exegetical method of modern historical criticism has left us a handful of linguistic, historical, and literary

crumbs, but no bread. Skilled as it is in analyzing individual data, the method has refused permission to search for the unity and integrity of these data.

Today, postmoderns see interpretive frameworks as inevitable, a development that has opened the way—and the market—for this new commentary series. The body of apostolic doctrine coming to us from the time of the early church “provides the clarifying principles that guide exegetical judgment toward a coherent overall reading of Scripture as a unified witness. Doctrine, then, is the schematic drawing that will allow the reader to organize the vast heterogeneity of the words, images, and stories of the Bible into a readable, coherent whole” (12). The aim is to encourage an unashamedly doctrinal, or theological, reading of Scripture. This commentary series rests on the fundamental belief that the church’s dogma serves to structure and integrate the otherwise disparate and disconnected data of biblical interpretation.

How, then, does this particular volume engage in theological interpretation?

Noting that the book of Acts does not occupy a prominent place within the liturgical history of the church, the author acknowledges that his commentary will need to draw on other commentaries dating from the first half of the history of the church. These include the commentary of John Chrysostom (fifty-five homilies from around 400), the commentaries of Cassiodorus and the Venerable Bede, and the commentary written by Archbishop Theophylact of Bulgaria.

To say that this work is primarily theological rather than philological means, among other things, that at various points where a theological issue arises, the author pauses for an extended and concentrated discussion of that issue in terms of the early church’s interpretation and teaching. Taken together these discussions constitute a kind of *loci communes*, resembling the commentary style of the Reformation period. Philip Melancthon was the most famous practitioner of the τόποι or *loci* method in exegesis, whose lectures on Romans (entitled *Loci communes*) were designed not as a systematic theology, but as a handbook for

studying Scripture. These particular discussions grew into a logical arrangement of doctrinal topics (like the relation between reason and revelation, the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, justification, sacraments, etc.). Out of this grew the *Loci theologici*, the standard arrangement for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lutheran and Reformed dogmatics.

This particular commentary on Acts features discussions of assorted topics, including “Miracles as ‘Signs’” (Acts 6:8), “The Paradox of Sacred Space and Sacred Time” (Acts 7:47-48), “‘Both Seen and Unseen’: The Angels as ‘Ministering Spirits’” (Acts 12:7), “‘Accuracy’ in the Confession of Christian Doctrine” (Acts 18:24-26a), “The Law of Reason, the Law of Nations, the Law of God” (Acts 25:8), and “The Predicament of the Christian Historian” (Acts 27:1).

Matters of introduction (isogogics) are treated briefly within some twelve pages. Consistent with the overwhelming testimony of the church’s tradition, the author of Acts is identified as Luke the physician. The textual basis of this commentary is the final form of the text, taken in its canonical context, an approach complicated by the existence not only of many textual variants, but also of what may be seen as two distinct editions of the book of Acts. One of these editions, Codex Bezae (Codex D), may be termed *textus a patribus receptus* (the text accepted by the church fathers, identified throughout this commentary as TPR). The basis text for this commentary, then, is the textual reconstruction based on Codex Bezae supplied in 2000 by Dominican New Testament scholar Marie-Émile Boismard of the École Biblique. The entire subject of textual variants receives further attention later in the commentary, in a *locus* related to Acts 20:28a, a verse which contains “probably the most egregious instance in the entire book of Acts of the theological and dogmatic puzzles that textual criticism can pose” (219). The author concludes this discussion of the original text of Acts by putting a question to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1.8), specifically its claim that the Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture were immediately inspired by God, and, by his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages. If this is so, the author asks, why doesn’t this same divine care

extend to the preservation of words and sentences in their original and inspired formulations, down to the individual letters (220-221)? Regrettably the reader is not directed to competent replies to precisely this question, answers available from numerous commentators on this passage from the Westminster Confession.

This commentary will need to be used in a way different from most modern commentaries. Its topical discussions, though anchored in particular passages, synthesize multiple passages from the book of Acts, so that reading everything the author says on a given topic will require frequent page-turning and consulting of the textual index.

As an illustration of the author's approach, consider Acts 12:21-23, where we read of King Herod receiving the people's ascription of deity and being smitten by an angel because he did not give God the glory. In this commentary, these verses serve to anchor an extended discussion (*locus*) under the heading, "Sin Defined as 'Refusing to Let God Be God'." The author begins immediately by focusing on the terse and central observation that the king "did not give God the glory," explaining briefly the nuances of various Greek words and phrases, and referencing other parts of Scripture (including, in this case, 2 Macc. 9:8-9—illustrating the increasingly prevalent custom among scholars of citing apocryphal books alongside canonical Scripture without distinguishing them). The sins of Judas Iscariot and of Ananias and Sapphira are explained, followed by this summary: "Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira, King Herod—to each of these the words used here about Herod could be applied: 'He did not give God the glory.' In both the Old and New Testament the essence of sin, therefore, is seen as idolatry, which manifested itself sometimes overtly and sometimes covertly, as 'gross idolatry' or as 'fine idolatry' (→19:28)" (151). Other examples of human pride arrayed against divine glory appear in Scripture, including that of Elymas the sorcerer (13:8-11). "Even such social sins as slavery (16:16-19) and avarice earned similar epithets from the apostles not primarily on moral or socioethical grounds as such, but because they gave the glory not to God but to his creatures (→4:32). In the history of Christian doctrine, especially in the

Latin West, this definition of sin became, in the hands of Saint Anselm of Canterbury, the foundation for a depiction of the atonement as an act of rendering *satisfactio* to the ‘honor’ or *rectitudo* of God, which human sin had violated (→3:18). Another way of defining sin, as captivity to the oppression of the devil (→10:38) and of death, had, as its counterpart doctrine of redemption, the image of *Christus Victor* (→13:8-11)” (152).

Notice how frequently the reader is directed to other, related *loci* (signaled by the →). The commentary employs two kinds of cross-referencing, the usual one directing the reader to related Scripture passages, another one guiding the reader along a trail of topically related discussions. This distinguishes the volume from either a typical modern Bible commentary or a typical modern systematic theology.

Notice as well how quickly the reader is moved from assertion to conclusion, from observation to implication, without making explicit all the connecting arguments. The move from the illustrative misdeeds of Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, and Herod to the conclusion that both OT and NT see the essence of sin as idolatry seems stunningly fast. Such a conclusion may be attractive, but its validation requires a more extensive analysis of various Scripture texts whose narratives, stipulations, prophecies, and poetry address both the matter of idolatry and the nature of sin. Moreover, those interested in theological exegesis will likely be unsatisfied with the apparent reductionism in defining the essence of sin as idolatry. Surely the church’s traditional understanding of the essence of sin includes seeing it as disobedience and as covenant breaking, among other features. Although Bible interpreters throughout history have always acknowledged the presence of sin and sought to describe its nature, it is difficult to find a consensus definition of sin’s essence.

Our brief evaluation of both the project of theological interpretation in general, and this commentary in particular, begins by asking: What is theological exegesis? Perhaps the most useful background sourcebook for understanding this approach is the work edited by a well-known contemporary American exponent, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, who with others has produced the

significant *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). Readers of this review will find helpful Vanhoozer's introductory essay, together with the dictionary article by Daniel J. Treier on contemporary theological hermeneutics, in explaining what aims to be a recovery and restoration project. Many of those concerned with the theological interpretation of Scripture admire the precritical era of biblical exegesis for results that were both unified and integrated. This current project is guided by the claims that biblical interpretation belongs to the church, and that we need no longer accept the prevailing ideologies of critical scholarship, which have erected walls within Scripture between the testaments and between the original human authors, and within theology itself between various disciplines. The church's ecumenical creedal consensus furnishes the Bible interpreter with both the context for using the tools of grammatical, historical, and literary exegesis, and the means to integrate the findings of these sub-disciplines.

But there is more to it than recovery. Theological interpretation involves a hermeneutical component, a self-conscious desire to explicate the meaning of the biblical text within the text's own ecclesial-historical function. Such an approach is dissatisfied with attempts to locate textual meaning "behind" the text, in terms of hypothetical communities generating unverifiable oral and written traditions which have evolved through conjectured stages. It is also dissatisfied with locating meaning "in front of the text," that is, within the communal use of Scripture, in terms of the reader determining textual meaning. By contrast, theological interpretation begins with asserting that as inscripturated divine revelation, Scripture functions to communicate the living Word of God with an eye to its recipients knowing God.

This project is generating lively debate, seen in the spate of journal articles and books, and in the production already of a dictionary of essays devoted to the approach.

Listening to this conversation may help clarify important hermeneutical issues that continue to live within the Reformed theological community. The relationship between "biblical

theology” and “systematic theology” could certainly be clarified with the help of this effort. Fortifying the relationship between the theological academy and the church could be another dividend. And recovering the role of the church’s *regula fidei* within exegesis may well be a third benefit.

That having been said, however, this particular commentary on Acts bears a few features that will need to be addressed in future volumes in this series.

If we agree that significant advances in methods of biblical interpretation occurred during and after the Reformation, which are not reflected in ancient and medieval exegesis, why would we need a commentary that is basically a repository of early church exegesis, and that relating only to selected topics anchored in the text of Acts? We would argue that matters of translation, lexical meaning, historical context, and literary structure are essential to biblical exegesis—and that theological interpretation is the summative-integrative culmination. One receives the impression that this particular commentary may have begun with writing a number of (helpful) *loci communes* drawing on the exegetical tradition of the early church and its ecumenical councils, whereafter the text of Acts was read with a view to composing appropriate prose contexts within which large numbers of cross-references to these *loci* were embedded. The point is that a commentary providing *only* or *mostly* theological exegesis without thorough accompanying grammatical, historical, and literary exegesis appears no more useful or helpful than one which omits the component of theological exegesis altogether.

Another feature deserving comment is the self-imposed restriction to the Nicene tradition. One is left to ponder why this effort to rehabilitate theological interpretation would discount the exegetical benefits of the doctrinal development embodied in Reformation confessions, particularly involving doctrines of sin, grace, salvation, and the church. Perhaps this, more than any other feature, illustrates the challenges to be faced in using the strategies of postmodern theory to recover the style of premodern exegesis.

The entire enterprise of restoring theological exegesis to its rightful place deserves our attention. This volume illustrates for us much of its promise, and several of its challenges.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Kurt Anders Richardson, *Reading Karl Barth: New Directions for North American Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 246. ISBN 0-8010-2729-2 \$21.99.

Karl Barth's theology is experiencing something of a rebirth in the North American church and academy today. The number of books introducing readers to Barth's thought, or analyzing some aspect of it, continues to increase. Richardson's book, *Reading Karl Barth*, stands out in examining the reception of Barth's work in North America, along with the varied assessments it has received. It also stands out in providing a brief overview of the Swiss theologian's life, and how his theology was taken up by others and developed. Richardson accents these features, which serve as background to his more focused analysis of Barth's big ideas.

The subtitle of this book "New Directions for North American Theology" reflects that the author is concerned, in part, to analyze North American theology as such. In a chapter entitled "*Theologia Americana, Theologia Viatorum*" [American Theology, Pilgrim Theology], the author takes up the relationship between Barth's pilgrim theology and the multi-faceted and richly-textured environment of theology in America today (for resources here, see fn 1, 79-80). Richardson sees Barth's project as suited for and prophetic to our times precisely because it is a pilgrim theology, which he explains as follows: "Pilgrim theology ... understands itself in the humility of human faith and thus dependent on the grace of God. It testifies to grace that is the bridge between God's self-knowing and our knowing of him, a bridge not only of being but also of time—'*Theologie zwischen den Zeiten*' (theology between the times), as living through the tension between the now and the not yet of the coming of Christ and the kingdom of God" (80-1).

Thus Richardson writes in support of Barth, with a desire to present Barth as both setting an agenda and, in most cases, providing a new answer or remedy to current theological ills, especially in facing the challenges of (post)modernism and the changing American cultural environment. Specific topics of Barth's theology that Richardson explores include the Swiss theologian's opting for pro-legomenon against prolegomena (where the Word of God addresses us before we have anything to say—and so from the outset we are introduced to Barth's Christocentrism); his doctrine of the Trinity (God's "God of God"—where the trinitarian knowledge of God is mediated through Christ, and theological method likewise proceeds through a knowledge of Christ as present with us in the here-and-now); and his Christology, giving us "God with Us and We with God," wherein we discover that salvation is wholly a divine initiative apart from us and yet addressed to us in Christ—all is centered in Christ. Humanity is defined and understood in Jesus Christ; God's gracious address and judging verdict come to us in Christ—the Elected and the Rejected; our qualified yes is because of God's eternal and absolute Yes of election in Christ, ushering creation and redemption forth into an existence of reconciliation: God with us and we with God. And all of the above because God addresses us in the threefold form of the Word: Word-event, Scripture, and proclamation, which bears an analogy to God as Triune: Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness. And so Barth's theology honors *Deus extra nos*, *Deus pro nobis*, *Deus in nobis*.

Richardson's book also explores Eberhard Jüngel's contribution to the interpretation, improvement, and advancement of Barth's theology. Richardson laments that Jüngel's important work on Barth's doctrine of baptism is unavailable in the English language. For Jüngel argues that Barth's work on the sacrament of baptism (*CD IV/4* fragment) well-illustrates how Barth "corrected himself" from volume I of the *Church Dogmatics* to volume IV. Barth passionately embraces the phrase *in nobis* relative to God's gracious action. Barth's staked out position is well-stated in the thesis that heads *CD IV/4* fragment, entitled "The Foundation of the Christian Life": "A man's turning to faithfulness

to God, and consequently to calling upon Him, is the work of this faithful God which, perfectly accomplished in the history of Jesus Christ, in virtue of the awakening, quickening and illuminating power of this history, becomes a new beginning of life as his baptism with the Holy Spirit. The first step of this life of faithfulness to God, the Christian life, is a man's baptism with water, which by his own decision is requested of the community and which is administered by the community, as the binding confession of his obedience, conversion and hope, made in prayer for God's grace, wherein he honours the freedom of this grace."

Baptism, for Barth, is an answering act, not a means of grace. Water baptism is not an "effective sign of grace"; rather, the believer participates in God's grace because water baptism expresses the human decision in conversion that corresponds to the divine act of Holy Spirit baptism. This, as it stands, forbids or excludes infant baptism. Just as sacrament is no longer means of grace, for Barth, so human preaching is no longer a form of the Word of God. Instead, baptism and the Lord's Supper and preaching *correspond* to the Word of God. Baptism, then, is best likened to a petition in prayer, and the Lord's Supper is analogous to a prayer of thanksgiving. Baptism, as a human "answering act" to Word of God, corresponds to the Word of God, for it is an obedient act of human refusal (confessing sin) and human agreement (confessing faith) analogous to prayer. Baptism grounds the Christian life, and is the believer's decisive obedient act as part of an entire ethical life.

Richardson's presentation of Jüngel's (un-translated) work on Barth's doctrine of baptism is the most groundbreaking (for English readers) and informative, not to mention interesting, material in the book. Noteworthy here is the thesis Richardson sets forth (*via* Jüngel) regarding the central interpretive place Barth's doctrine of baptism must occupy for a correct understanding of *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*. For his part, Richardson, unlike many English-language interpreters of Barth, appears most favorable to Barth's conception of water baptism as an adult "answering act," corresponding to the Word of God, the Holy Spirit baptism that is God saving grace *in nobis*. In opposition to

Barth's view on baptism, Richardson presents the criticisms of George Hunsinger and John Webster, respectively. Richardson demurs, and offers an interpretative defense of Barth, showing how Barth's "adult" baptism perspective fits his bigger project.

The final chapter of Richardson's study on Barth is called "To Be a Pilgrim Theologian." Here Richardson reflects on the multi-faceted career of Karl Barth, the complexity of the man, the imagination and devotion of the churchman, the pilgrimage of his work, and his work as a pilgrim theologian. For Barth, the work of theology brings a combination of humility and confidence—humility, since all is a gift of God, everything; confidence, since God is God and God is certain, and we can be certain of his hold on us. This applies to the church in its failures and sins as well. Richardson offers a fascinating portrait of Barth's prophetic and pastoral labors in reaching out to post-war German Christians who were complicitous with Nazism.

Perhaps what Richardson most wants readers of his book and of Barth himself to come away with today is to continue the pilgrimage, but to do it after Barth's example. Rather than merely mimic Barth, or side-step around him, theologians today need to wrestle afresh with Barth in the ongoing project of wrestling with the Spirit and Word of God. Richardson sees Barth as requisite reading for the North American theological agenda.

—J. Mark Beach

Hans Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. 610. ISBN 0-8028-2986-4 \$45.00.

In the preface to his book, Hans Schwarz notes what a formidable task it is "to bring two hundred years together in a global context." It is indeed a daunting undertaking, and Schwarz, who is a professor of Protestant Theology at the University of Regensburg (Germany), pulls it off well. This book is a whirlwind tour of the post-Enlightenment theological scene, ranging from Kant and Schleiermacher, on the front end, to Black theology (e.g., James Cone, Cornel West, etc.), Feminist theology (e.g.,

Rosemary Radford Ruether, Mary Daly, etc.), Postliberal theology (e.g., John Hick, Paul Knitter, etc.) and various theologies of liberation and hope on the other end. Given that Schwarz here offers a global approach, he does not deal exclusively with Protestantism in the West, but also with Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and the theologies of Africa, Asia, and India. Schwarz is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the book reflects the strengths and liabilities of that connection and those convictions.

About this book Wolfhart Pannenburg observes that one of its “advantages is that it presents all of the individual theologians in their social and cultural settings along with paying attention to their personal biographies.” Schwarz does this by presenting a brief biographical sketch of the various theologians and their teachings. He also gives a helpful, indeed, an invaluable bibliography for the theologians under consideration at the end of each chapter. Taken all together, these features of the book allow the reader to dip into the work at any point, get a firm idea of a theologian in his context, and explore further by pursuing the lists of resources provided. One might, for example, read about Adolf van Harnack as the height of “cultural Protestantism” (128-135) and find at the end of that chapter a list for further reading by and about Harnack (137).

As typical of most recent books on the modern theological scene, particularly those with “global” in the title, the accent in this work falls on what we might broadly call “liberal” theology, i.e., theology which is not biblically and confessionally bound. Accordingly, scant treatment is given to the theologians and the theologies that agree with the Reformed and Presbyterian confessions and catechisms. There is, in chapter 3, a short section on the Mercersburg Theology (60-64), the Princeton Theology (65-69), some Dutch theologians (73-78), and Charles Hodge’s opposition to Darwinism enjoys coverage in Chapter 7 (217-219). These sections largely exhaust Schwarz’s treatment of “conservative” theologians and their theologies. Insofar as much of the theology since the Enlightenment has been “liberal,” Schwarz’s focus may be thought to be unobjectionable and even anticipated.

Important Reformed theologians like Charles Hodge, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Bavinck receive comparatively little space in this volume. One could argue that Hodge warrants extensive treatment, given all the thousands of ministers that he trained and influenced in his more than fifty years of teaching. It is also the case that since the time of Kant, the ranks of philosophers and theologians have come to be made up largely of academics. Previously, few philosophers or theologians were purely academics, with most of the former having other occupations and most of the latter being parish ministers.

Much academic theology since Kant's time has failed to impact the churches positively. Some academic theology has adversely affected the church while other such theology has had little influence or notice outside of academia. From a book like Schwarz's, one might think that some of this rather bizarre theology would be regnant in most of the churches. While academic, liberal theology has not failed to have its impact in mainline churches (which have suffered steady declines of membership in recent decades), it seems that liberal theology is unable to sustain vital Christianity. We know that in the long run, of course, liberalism is fatal. Whereas the mainline churches have imbibed liberal theology and declined, Reformed and evangelical churches have grown. Much of the theology described in this volume is now moribund, if it wasn't, in fact, dead on arrival. One would never learn the worldwide impact of Reformed and evangelical theology by reading a volume like this. My contention is not that this material should not be covered, but that it should be treated with the proper qualifications, i.e., certain forms of academic theology are more restricted in their influence in the churches than is often recognized in mainstream treatments of them.

What is the value of this book, then, for those who adhere to traditional, confessional Christian theology? It serves well to inform us of the lives, teachings, and contexts for many of the theologians of the last two hundred years, furnishing us with many unbelieving foils as well as significant contextual insight into the theologians and their theologies. Perhaps the greatest benefit in

studying the post-Kantian theological landscape is it enables one to see that, in an increasingly secularized world in which the noumenal is sundered from the phenomenal, theologians have for the last two hundred years compromised theology. Modern and post-modern theologians have departed from the Word of God, preferring, unlike Moses, to enjoy the dainties of Egypt rather than to endure for a season the suffering of God's people. Such unfaithful theology ends up on the proverbial ash heap of history. Meanwhile, the church militant marches on instructed by those who remain faithful to the testimony raised by the Reformers.

—Alan D. Strange

Hendrik Stander and Johannes Louw, *Baptism in the Early Church*. Cary Publications, a division of Evangelical Press, 2006. Pp. 192. ISBN 0-9527-9131-5. \$14.99.

This is a rather curious book. Its authors are styled as “recognized authorities in the field of Patristic studies,” both having served as head of Greek in the Department of Ancient Languages at the University of Pretoria (South Africa). The book presents itself as a study of the practice of baptism in the ancient church, particularly regarding the proper subjects of baptism. While the mode of baptism is addressed at points throughout the book, the main concern of the book is to establish, contra much ecclesiastical opinion, that the ancient church did not practice infant baptism but rather reserved baptism for adults able to testify of God's saving work in them.

While the professors are purportedly “objective” in their conclusion that the church fathers did not teach or practice infant baptism, no one imagines that the publisher, who works in cooperation with The Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America, is without bias in the matter. These anti-paedobaptists are admittedly eager to put this work before the reading public because they believe that it redresses what they regard as a decidedly widespread erroneous view, vis., that the early church practiced infant baptism. In the foreword to the work, James

Renihan notes that, while Henry D'Anvers in the seventeenth century sought to demonstrate that "believer's baptism was the practice of the apostolic era," various writers since then have argued strongly that infant baptism was the practice: Richard Baxter, Joachim Jeremias, George Bethune, and others have argued for paedobaptism (8).

All parties to this dispute agree that Scripture alone is authoritative and thus determinative for our belief and practice. Renihan acknowledges that while Scripture, not history, serves as the final judge in theological debate, he also asserts that history may "make a significant contribution to the discussion, shedding light on the practices of those living closest to the era of the Bible" (7). Renihan rejoices in this work, insisting that "one must acknowledge the unique credibility attached to the work" (9). Since this book was not "penned by authors with Baptist convictions, it might [not] be dismissed as an instance of denominational polemics," Renihan assures us, reminding us that "since these men have no such party axes to grind, their conclusions deserve serious attention" (10).

The authors' conclusions are at direct variance with, as Renihan claims, the frequent assertion of paedobaptist authors that "the unanimous historical testimony of the ancient church is in favour of infant baptism, and that the believer's baptism view is a relatively recent development and thus illegitimate" (8). Not so, claims Renihan, and, in fact, the opposite is true: "infant baptism was *not* the practice of the Apostles and their immediate successors, but developed through the convergence of several factors. Gradually, paedobaptism came to be the majority position in the church but not until the latter part of the fourth century" (10).

Stander and Louw make similar claims to Renihan above in their first chapter, on "Baptism and the use of church history by modern scholars." Thus they are set to disprove what so many of us have come to believe: that the practice of infant baptism was widespread in the early church. They then turn, in a series of short chapters (there are twenty-six altogether), to examine the beliefs and practices of those in the ancient church, beginning with

the Apostolic Fathers, Aristides, Justin Martyr, etc. and ending with Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopuestia, and considerations from early Christian art.

Stander and Louw apply a very dubious interpretative method to their reading of the primary source literature. They read, for instance, the call of Justin Martyr for the baptisand to engage in “fasting, prayer, and instruction” as an evident requirement for baptismal candidates to be adults, since children are incapable of performing such requirements properly (181). It was in the transition, our authors argue, from baptism as purely a symbol (primarily a symbol of regeneration, which our authors appear to think, occurs solely among adults and not among children) to baptism as performative that the shift to admitting infants to baptism occurred. Cyprian (ca. 250) and others who followed him begin to teach that, as a performative and not merely symbolic act, baptism effects “(1) remission of sins, (2) guaranteed entrance into the kingdom of heaven, that is, it ensures salvation, and (3) bestowal of a number of spiritual blessings” (182). I know of no one, ancient, medieval, or modern who would affirm point 2 without qualification. Thus one is suspicious that this is caricature, not careful historical research.

Fathers in the early church, according to Stander and Louw, begin to link this performative view of baptism with a number of other views, including “the doctrine of inherited original sin” (the doctrine of original sin is actually not clarified until Augustine). “Others linked baptism by analogy to circumcision,” and these “links” ultimately added up to Cyprian, Chrysostom and others no longer requiring that baptismal candidates come “confessing personal belief and understanding what baptism meant” (183-185). So infant baptism arose because of these factors, our authors contend, and not because “adult baptism in the early church entailed a missionary situation” and that adult baptism largely gave way to infant baptism once first-generational Gentile conversion had occurred in any given place (185-186). No, our authors insist, the ancient church witnessed so many adult baptisms not because of the conversion of the heathen but because

that is what they believed baptism to entail, i.e., an adult confession as prerequisite.

To say that our authors give an odd reading to the baptismal beliefs and practices of the church fathers is an understatement. It would take another volume to go person by person through the history of the ancient church to refute this book and to read the original sources more clearly, which our authors skew time and again in their reading of the historical record. While it is not correct simply to assert that the ancient church clearly from the earliest time baptized infants, period, end of discussion, it is equally incorrect to assert, as do our authors, that infant baptism was unknown until the fourth century. The treatment of baptism is far more balanced in reliable histories of the period, like Stuart Hall's *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* or W.H.C. Frend's *The Rise of Christianity*. Furthermore, our authors, all their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, were not able successfully to surmount all the evidence brought forth by Joachim Jeremias and others for the practice of infant baptism in the early centuries. This odd book neither proves its case nor convinces any but those who already oppose infant baptism.

—Alan D. Strange

Anthony C. Thiselton, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. viii + 344. ISBN 0-8010-3120-6 \$24.99.

Pastors and college students will most benefit from Thiselton's succinct analysis of the main topics and personages surrounding the philosophy of religion. Thiselton offers clear, tight, and accurate definitions for each entry. Theologians who are looking for a synopsis account of a person or theme, or seeking clarity and precision on a given concept or term, will be greatly aided by Thiselton's penetrating explanations. Topics like "eternity," "dualism," "evil," "subjectivism," "materialism," "divine omniscience," and countless others are neatly defined and explained. The foremost contemporary Christian philosophers

like Plantinga, Wolterstoff, and Swinburne are each given place, even as all the major philosophers of the Western tradition receive an entry. Moreover, big philosophical themes like “Enlightenment,” “logic,” “pragmatism,” “selfhood,” “truth,” “foundationalism,” “ethics” are also given attention. This book is up-to-date and demonstrates a well-grounded understanding in contemporary philosophy of religion. Important theologians are treated as well.

While this is not an apologetics manual, inasmuch as the volume treats many areas where philosophical matters intersect with apologetics, any believer interested in defending the faith will find this a valuable tool. Thiselton’s book is a fine resource and will prove exceedingly useful to professional philosophers, pastors, and students.

—J. Mark Beach

David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*. Studies in Christian Social Ethics and Economics, Number 1, ed. Anthony B. Bradley. Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2006. Pp. iii + 75. ISBN 978-880595-23-0. \$6.00.

In *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, Dr. David VanDrunen of Westminster Seminary California presents the first volume in a series of short books published by the Acton Institute on the application of Christian ethics to realms of church and society. If this first volume is any indication of the rest, this series has a place in the marketplace of ideas. VanDrunen’s writing style is as clear as his method, stating what he attempts to do, laying out his evidence, and summarizing his findings – no doubt a testament to his training in law.

In the introduction, he gives a general definition of natural law as “the moral order inscribed in the world and especially in human nature, an order that is known to all people through their natural faculties (especially reason and/or conscience) even apart from supernatural divine revelation that binds morally the whole of the human race” (1). Natural law, VanDrunen shows, is a basic aspect of theology in both Roman Catholic and Protestant systems. It is here that VanDrunen’s interlocutor comes into

view. Contemporary Protestant authors, including Reformed thinkers, have eschewed natural law on the grounds that it 1) detracts from the authority of Scripture, 2) makes human nature our moral authority, 3) does not take seriously the noetic effects of sin, and 4) presents a monolithic moral standard that is not sensitive to the progress of redemptive history (3-4). This opening catalog of objections illustrates one of the few criticisms of this book. The lack of footnotes is understandably a downside of a series of short, introductory books such as this one. Nevertheless, it would have benefited the reader had the editor included more documentation in order to examine and weigh the reasoning behind these objections.

The rest of the book is VanDrunen's explicitly *biblical* defense of this classic, yet forgotten, doctrine. Chapter 2 on "Natural Law and Human Nature" makes its starting point not the oft-repeated texts in discussions of natural law in Romans 1:19-20 and 2:14-15, but the image of God. This pedagogical turn is commendable as it lays aside the preconceived objections of those opposed to natural law and enters this subject in a fresh way. VanDrunen, then, moves away from any abstract doctrine of natural law to its source, saying, "The foundation for speaking about natural law is not nature but the creator of nature, God himself" (8). Since God is righteous and just, our creation in his image means that in the beginning we by nature had the capacity for righteousness and justice. Natural law is not something outside of God found through independent reason, but is the way God "wired" us according to the very nature of God himself. This is also evidenced by the classic Reformed idea that Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 show that salvation in Christ is a re-creation of the original image of God, in righteousness, holiness, and knowledge. This seems to create a problem, though. If redemption is re-creation, then sin has obliterated the image and therefore the natural capacity to do righteousness, holiness, and know God. As bad as the fall has affected us, fallen man nevertheless still continues in some sense in the image of God (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). Appealing to Romans 1:18-32, VanDrunen states that rebellious, sinful man is inexcusable before God, whether Jew

with special revelation or Gentile with only creation. All men know God exists and that there are certain moral absolutes. In fact, Paul even speaks of one sin as “against nature” (1:26; cf. 2:14-15).

Chapter 3, “Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms Doctrine,” follows another line of argument in showing the biblical teaching on natural law. God rules over all things, but in two different ways: he rules the civil kingdom (Calvin)/kingdom of the left hand (Luther) as creator and sustainer of temporal, earthly, and provisional matters, while he rules the spiritual kingdom (Calvin)/kingdom of the right hand (Luther) as creator, but especially as redeemer of the eschatological kingdom. This reviewer believes this chapter is especially instructive for understanding the theology of the Reformed confessions. We see this two kingdoms doctrine of the Reformers, for example, in the *Belgic Confession*, article 36. Whereas the opening words in the received English translations say, “We believe that our *gracious* God, because of the depravity of mankind, has appointed kings, princes, and magistrates,” the Latin text actually speaks of God as the *Optimum Maximum*, that is, the Highest/Greatest Good. This is classic language used by the Roman philosophers Lucretius and Cicero and used in Christian polemics by Augustine, for example, to speak of God as the “highest good” (*summum bonum*). In the opening words of his work, “On the Nature of Good Against the Manicheans,” Augustine said, “The highest good, than which there is no higher, is God” (*Summum bonum, quo superius non est, Deus est*. Cf. *Confessions*, 2.6.12, 7.4.6; *The City of God*, 8.3. In 1.4.4 of his *Confessions*, Augustine speaks of God as the *summe optime*). The *Belgic Confession* follows this classic teaching, grounding the civil government in God’s goodness, not his grace, in creation, not redemption.

While VanDrunen’s cursory survey of the two kingdoms doctrine in the history of the church is helpful, the rest of chapter 3 is incisive. Reading like a primer on classic covenant theology, VanDrunen traces these two kingdoms through Old and New Testaments. After the Fall, God called Adam and Eve as his redeemed people and, despite cursing the elements of the creation

mandate of Genesis 1:26-27, these things would continue in the world. Genesis 4 shows the two kingdoms beginning to take shape. Cultural development took place in livestock, music, and metalwork while God's people called upon his name. The justice of the civil kingdom protected even Cain, who had been cursed by God. After the Flood, we read of God's covenant with all creation, as he would preserve it. In contrast, the covenant made with Abram and later with Moses was with God's special people. Here VanDrunen shows how the two kingdoms related. Despite the religious particularity of the people of God, they still lived as citizens of the world. Thus Abram fought in wars alongside kings of the earth to combat injustice (Gen. 14), made treaties with kings (Gen. 21), and entered into commerce with them (Gen. 23). What is most insightful is how VanDrunen shows that despite these two kingdoms coming into one under Moses in a theocracy, when the people of God were outside the Promised Land, they dealt with their neighbors not according to the covenant at Sinai, but the covenant after the Flood. He cites the examples of David and Solomon (2 Sam. 10:2; 1 Kings 5, 10), the exiled community in Babylon (Jer. 29), and the life of Daniel. Under the New Covenant, God made his covenant with the church, not a particular ethnic people. Therefore, there is no holy place nor a holy geopolitical institution like the theocracy of Israel as the church lives as exiles like our forefathers in Babylon and the patriarchs before them.

Chapters 4-5 go on to discuss natural law in the realms of these two kingdoms, respectively. Chapter 4 deals with "Natural Law in the Civil Kingdom," a kingdom that is not religious yet is not morally neutral either. This means that Scripture is not the norm for the civil kingdom, but natural law is. The main reason given for this is that the moral instruction in Scripture comes in the context of the indicative-imperative structure. Thus, it addresses those in the covenant community, the recipients of the indicative (cf. Ps. 147:19-20; Col. 3:1ff.). Here VanDrunen cites *Westminster Confession of Faith* 19.4 in a footnote to show how the 17<sup>th</sup> century English Reformed theologians expressed this truth relative to Israel. This leads to another comment of constructive

criticism. The book would have benefited with more interaction with or at least reference to the Reformed confessions, especially in light of Reformed objectors to natural law. For example, the language of the *Canons of Dort*, especially III/IV, 4, speaks of totally depraved humanity still retaining “the light of nature.” The “glimmering” of this light gives man some knowledge of God, natural things, the difference between good and evil, and regard for virtue and good behavior.

VanDrunen then gives a helpful explanation that despite natural law being the basis of the civil kingdom, it has “limited and sober expectations” (40). What he means is that natural law “gives no reason to expect the attainment of paradise on earth” – a truth that needs hearing by those seeking transformation of society.

What exactly, then, is the teaching of natural law in regards to the civil kingdom? VanDrunen gives three areas: 1) the acknowledgement of things “not to be done,” 2) the fear of God, and 3) a common humanity. That natural law teaches of things “not to be done,” VanDrunen illustrates from Abraham’s interaction with Abimelech in Genesis 20. There the pagan king makes a moral claim against a man in covenant with God, entering into a meaningful ethical dialog about the fact that passing off a wife for a sister is “not to be done” because it caused her to be the wife of two men. In Genesis 34 the tables turn with the covenant people using this argument against a pagan king in his land that rape should “not be done.”

Returning to Genesis 20, VanDrunen illustrates “the fear of God” aspect of natural law, where Abraham confessed that there actually was fear of God in Gerar, while his lie was directly attributable to the fact that there was not. As VanDrunen says, the fear of God was not meant to speak of a redemptive relationship to God (the “fear of the *LORD*”) but “that the people have some sense of accountability to one greater than they and that this sense constrains their wicked behavior” (46). He goes on to say that this is what the *Egyptian* midwives (following the work of David Novak in his work, *Natural Law in Judaism* [Cambridge University Press, 1998]), based their refusal to practice infanticide upon in Exodus 1.

The fear of God leads to a “common humanity” because it implies the fact that we are to have respect for fellow image-bearers. Using Job 31:13-15, VanDrunen shows that Job’s “realization that he must answer for his earthly conduct to a heavenly judge, constrained his behavior toward other people” (50). His evidence of this aspect of natural law from Amos 1:3-2:3 is brilliant. After reminding us that Israel was a theocracy, in which the two kingdoms were one, he shows that when Amos rebukes the nations around Israel, Amos does not appeal to the Decalogue but to “a treaty of brotherhood” (51). This “treaty of brotherhood” forbade the selling of other humans into slavery. And since this phrase signified a relationship of parity in the Ancient Near East (Shalom M. Paul, *Amos*, 61-2), this shows the nations of the earth recognized natural law.

Chapter 5 wraps up the argument of the book by dealing with “Natural Law in the Spiritual Kingdom.” After summarizing that redemption is a re-creation, in which “Christians are reestablished as the kind of creatures that can be what God originally intended his creature to be” (56), VanDrunen turns to the ways Scripture point to the natural world to teach the ethics of the spiritual kingdom. This is certainly one of the most intriguing parts of the book begging for more development. Scripture, VanDrunen says, speaks of things being unnatural by pointing to things that are unnatural in creation (e.g., Prov. 26:1; Amos 3:3-8). Scripture also teaches ethics by using natural analogies. Laziness is contrasted with the industry of the ant (Prov. 6:6-8). Israel’s unfaithfulness to their Master is contrasted with the obedience of some of the most unintelligent of the animal kingdom, the ox and the donkey (Isa. 1:2-3 cf. Jer. 8:7). As well, there are other appeals to the natural order of things in Isaiah (29:16), Jesus (Matt. 24:32-33), and Paul (1 Cor. 11:14-15).

Finally, the ethics of the world inform the ethics of the spiritual kingdom. Citing recent scholarship, VanDrunen shows that the laws of Exodus 20:23-23:19 bear a striking substantive and structural resemblance to the Code of Hammurabi (63-5) as well as the fact that parts of the Proverbs depend on parts of the proverbs of Ahiqar (65-6). Thus God, who “often issued the most

severe condemnations against the surrounding nations ... saw fit to incorporate significant sections of their legal documents into Israel's wise, holy, and righteous law" (65). Here VanDrunen could very well have cited the work of Mendenhall and its application in M. G. Kline in showing that the entire covenant/treaty structure used by Yahweh with Israel was also borrowed and adapted from Ancient Near Eastern sources. Furthermore, the New Testament borrows the world's ethical substance and structure in the household codes of the epistles (e.g., Col. 3).

VanDrunen's little book comes at a needed time for the church in her relation to the world. We live in a day when Christians, including those in the Reformed tradition, struggle with social problems and finding a place at the cultural table. This book is a helpful beginning. What VanDrunen shows us is that instead of turning to a "the Bible says" approach, which marginalizes the Christian faith from society, Christians need to interact with the world as the patriarchs of old, appealing to their creation in the image of God and to their innate sense of right and wrong, justice and injustice. This will not only keep the civil kingdom from expecting too much from its endeavors, but more importantly, it will keep the spiritual kingdom from placing its energies and expectations ultimately in a kingdom which shall end.

—Daniel R. Hyde

Jasper Vree and Johan Zwaan, eds. *Abraham Kuyper's Commentatio (1860): The Young Kuyper about Calvin, a Lasco, and the Church*. Vol. 1: *Introduction, Annotations, Bibliography, and Indices*. Vol. 2: *Commentatio*. Brill's Series in Church History, 24. Vol. 1: pp. xii, 256. Vol. 2: pp. 404, with Latin and Greek texts. Leiden: Brill, 2005. ISBN 90-04-14940-6 (cloth). €149.00. US\$199.00.

This two-volume primary source introduces and presents the previously unpublished text of Abraham Kuyper's prize-winning essay examining the ecclesiologies of John Calvin and Johannes a

Lasco. Written in Latin for a competition sponsored by the theological faculty in Groningen, the Netherlands, the *Commentatio* describes Calvin's and a Lasco's concepts of the church in terms of the lives and personalities of both men, and evaluates these views in the light of the gospel. Its full title is *Commentatio in quaestionem ab Ordine Theologorum positam in certamen litterarium die XV mensis Aprilis anni Domini MDCCCLIX indictum*. The year was 1860, and Kuyper was 22 years old.

The editors are themselves graduates of the university that Abraham Kuyper founded, the Free University in Amsterdam. Jasper Vree is Associate Professor in theology at the Free University, specializing in Dutch church history, with a focus on the nineteenth century "Groningen Movement" and on Abraham Kuyper. Johan Zwaan was special librarian for Classical Antiquity at the Free University, and edited several works of G. Groen van Prinsterer.

Determining the text of Kuyper's essay was the first order of business for editors Vree and Zwaan. The manuscript submitted by 15 April 1860 for the competition had been copied by another person, to prevent the judges from recognizing its author. Kuyper's original manuscript is lost, and the manuscript used for this publication had been transcribed by a copyist proficient in neither Latin nor theology. Numerous mistakes (averaging ten per manuscript page) needed correction for this publication, and a number of Kuyper's somewhat loose citations needed to be verified and amended.

Particularly valuable is the editors' historical introduction, opening up for us the development of research into the life and work of both Calvin and a Lasco until the time of Kuyper. Other matters reviewed here include nineteenth century ecclesiology in the Netherlands and Germany, the character of the Groningen theological faculty, and Kuyper's own theological development during this time. The content of the essay is reviewed with an eye to Kuyper's sources, especially the ecclesiology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, called by some "the father of modern Protestant theology."

The editors also provide a philological introduction, giving attention to the quality of Kuyper's Latin and to his method of citing other authors, and explaining the conventions used in this edition.

Several years later, Kuyper wrote a doctoral dissertation on a biography of a Lasco, which included only the first part of the *Commentatio* (not the entire essay, contrary to the impression given by several twentieth century Kuyper biographers). The title of this 1862 work is *Disquisitio historico-theologica, exhibens Joannis Calvini et Joannis à Lasco de ecclesia sententiarum inter se compositionem*.

At the heart of Kuyper's analysis and contribution in the earlier essay, according to the editors, was his fascination with Schleiermacher's view of the church as the society of Christ. Indeed, Christ is the center of the church, and the church is the center of Christianity. Kuyper heartily endorsed Schleiermacher's notion (developed in his *Der christliche Glaube*) that the strength of the church lay "in the mutual assembly and close association of Christians in Christ." It seems that, for Kuyper, a Lasco's emphasis on the church as *communio* fit much better with Schleiermacher's view than did Calvin's theocentric starting point. The church's unity was to be found within the living community rather than in doctrine or in rituals. All of this led Kuyper to view the church from the bottom up, giving attention to the members and their mutual relationship in Christ and organic life, also beyond the limits of congregational life and identity. We see here already the traces of Kuyper's emphasis on the church-as-organism, an idea that would later become an essential element of his Christian cultural philosophy. Already in this essay Kuyper devoted far more attention to what church members could do for the world, apart from communal worship, than, for example, to the marks of the church. The activities of church *members* are more significant than those of church *government*. According to Vree and Zwaan, for Kuyper "[t]he boundary [of the church] is not formed by the fact whether one has been baptized or confesses the true doctrine, but by the answer to the question whether people in their lives show signs of the basic principles of the new life, ignited by the Spirit" (55).

Within the organism of the church, all members are on equal footing, and no one member lords it over another. This explains Kuyper's aversion to Calvin's emphasis on the church-as-institute.

In the context of the second half of the nineteenth-century Netherlands, Kuyper's model was innovative. Thinking about the role of the members of the congregation was a novelty at this time. Since the Enlightenment, all of society, including the church, had been wrestling with the integration of the individual and the community, of subjects and rulers, of members and leaders—in short, with the integration of freedom and authority. Kuyper's commitment to the church as the integration of individual and community constituted nothing less than a platform from which to oppose both doctrinal hierarchicalism and a state church.

We have here, then, a product of the “early” Kuyper. Forty years later, after renewed study of Calvin and a greater appreciation for the Reformer's teaching, Kuyper was able to combine a theocentric predestinarian starting point with the notion of church-as-organism.

Readers are treated to a thorough, if not exhaustive, treatment of Kuyper's Latin, his method of quotation (the analysis of which is arranged under no fewer than eleven categories!), and a number of fine portraits and photo prints of the principal figures and several pages of the manuscript. Regrettably, numerous typographical errors distract the English reader, errors that seem to have been occasioned by word processors (computerized and human!) for which/whom English is not the primary language.

Reviewing these volumes for this journal left us hoping that the editors and publisher will provide us more material from this stage in the thought and career of the early Kuyper. It would be helpful if, in addition to this 1860 competition essay, a critical, annotated edition of Kuyper's 1862 dissertation could appear in print. And since these editors worked through the entire text of Kuyper's *Commentatio* so thoroughly, we may hope that they will soon provide us with an English translation of the Latin text.

Until these hopes are realized, those who are fascinated by Abraham Kuyper's life and thought, together with anyone

interested in nineteenth-century Dutch church history, must for the time being rest satisfied with the valuable treasure presented in these volumes.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs: Christ in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. 352. ISBN 0-8028-2902-3 \$25.00 (cloth).

This book is Wells' final installment of a four-volume critique of American culture, and of the evangelical church that has imbibed that culture and uncritically played to it.

The earlier books in this series, *No Place for Truth* (1993), *God in the Wasteland* (1994), *Losing Our Virtue* (1998), each explored features of our cultural demise and the church's failure to live and think in prophetic opposition to this grim spectacle. In the first of those volumes Wells asked his evangelical readers a startling question, Whatever happened to evangelical theology? That question was part exploration, part indictment. In that book Wells mustered the evidence to prosecute and convict. The answer to the question was to the point: the evangelical church lost its theology when it lost confidence in theology itself (that is, the theological enterprise) and came to doubt Scripture as adequate to address modern life in a (post)modern world. As it turns out, American pragmatism is a more dominant force than evangelical theology or its morality. In place of the old authorities, Wells demonstrated how evangelicals turned to new masters—specifically to the priest craft of statistical engineers and sociologists.

Meanwhile, in volume two, Wells embarked upon a remedy to this *placelessness* of truth in the contemporary world by boldly reasserting the *primacy* of truth against the orthodoxy of relativism. In a world that has no place for truth, there is no place for God. The Lord and Giver of truth, however, has entered our world (this wasteland) in Jesus Christ; and he re-enters the wasteland whenever the church reaffirms the gospel of the Lord

and his truth in the proclamation of the gospel. This is a fundamental point, for whenever the church has surrendered to the cultural currents of the age, abandoning the paddles of theology, she finds herself adrift and finally stranded on a dried up riverbed of a parched and thirsty wasteland; even more, she herself becomes parched and thirsty, a wasteland. In fact, however, the church is God's *possession*; and living from that reality, it creates its own culture and values and view of the world. This is life from the perspective of Christ and the gospel.

Part of re-inserting the truth into a culture of relativism requires regaining the moral vision of the Bible. Following the trajectory of his previous analyses, Wells showed in his third book how virtue is lost across the cultural landscape of media and academy; and, once more, he brought the evangelical church under his analysis and evaluation, specifically how that church has compromised or otherwise forfeited her moral integrity, and so is on the brink of salt losing its saltiness. As illustration, Wells demonstrates that the church, with the secular culture, has lost a sense of shame. Where sin has lost its moral weight, the cross of Christ likewise loses its centrality. We must recover the big, biblical themes of truth and right, sin and grace, divine wrath and Christ's sacrifice—all of this against therapeutic remedies offering internal relief. The evangelical church must repent of the idol of self and recover the gospel. If it does not, a bleaker future awaits. More specifically, unless the church sets about the recovery of theology, of a vision of God in his weightiness and holy majesty, and a revisioning of herself within a depraved society, practicing authentic spirituality, she is doomed to irrelevance in the present culture. God and his truth are the vision and the program.

Now in this fourth volume, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*, Wells points us to Christ in confrontation with the postmodern world. In Wells' presentation of postmodernism, we face a cultural *Zeitgeist* that pulls in different directions, centering upon an openness to the spiritual but not to the Spirit, brilliantly scientific and technologically driven while narcissistic and therapy laden, bombastic and individualistic while lonely and empty. Again, the evangelical church does not escape Wells' indictment in this

portrait. The church's culpability is best evidenced in her attempts to make herself relevant and palatable to post-moderns. The gospel however isn't a product for sale; and truth isn't designed for mere consumption. Although the consumer approach to selling Christianity looks innovative and alluring, it compromises the gospel message itself by keeping humans on the pedestal of life while God is merchandised.

Wells' examination of postmodernism first focuses upon the placelessness of Evil in our society—that is, post-moderns do not have a framework into which this concept fits. Meanwhile America is witnessing the emergence of increasing multiethnicity and the growth of a variety of old, non-Christian religions. For Wells, the central question for the church today is to articulate exactly “how Christ, in whom divine majesty and human frailty are joined in one person, is to be heard, and is to be preached, in a postmodern, multiethnic, multireligious society” (7, 8). We must reaffirm our faith that the Word of God proclaimed is the power of God unto salvation, and a Spirit-authenticated power at that. “When the Church loses the Word of God it loses the very means by which God does his work. In its absence, therefore, a script is being written, however unwittingly, for the Church's undoing, not in one cataclysmic moment, but in a slow, inexorable slide made up of piece by tiny piece of daily dereliction” (9).

Practically, this means we must avoid two errors, both having to do with contextualization. On the one hand we must safeguard against the tendency toward contextual relativism (where the gospel is made relative); on the other hand we must reject the notion that contextualization, in any form, is out-of-bounds. If the latter were true, Wells' analysis (or any analysis) of postmodernism would be irrelevant and unnecessary. No, the church must know the cultural world, the presuppositions, the belief-structures and moral assumptions, of the world into which it must go and make disciples.

Of the eight chapters that compose this book, chapter one examines the meaning of culture, and particularly (post)modern culture. Naturally, the Enlightenment is not to be underestimated in the significance it has played in giving us modern culture; but

Wells sees modernization as parallel to but not woven into the fabric of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment ushered in the (conceptual) disappearance of God, but industrialization and the rise of technology have been the nails in that coffin. God is no longer a player in regulating human desires and aspirations. Godlessness, in turn, breeds the religion of the self, and so it also breeds hedonism, consumerism, sensualism (and with these, loneliness, placelessness, the reign of image over substance), and an inflated sense of human potentiality.

The consequence of the Enlightenment's legacy of modernism is a postmodern rebellion. Wells explores this idea in chapter two, and he is careful to define his terms. Wells argues that "modernity and postmodernity are actually reflecting different aspects of our modernized culture. They are more like siblings in the same family than rival gangs in the same neighborhood" (62). Postmodernism is characterized by disillusionment with modernism; it is a kind of "unbelief taking revenge on unbelief." Wells' inspection requires that a distinction be made between postmodernism and postmodernity—the former being an intellectual formulation of ideas, the latter being a popular, unconscious, amorphous, social expression of the same. In either case, however, and in short form, the bottom line is that the canopy of meaning has collapsed—this is the postmodern world where reality is fluid and constantly changing, "open" to new choices. Truth is illusory, and every text is caught in a gnarled ball of subjectivism. Wells sums up the postmodern mind under three motifs: (1) no (comprehensive) worldview; (2) no truth; and (3) no purpose. This gloomy outcome, however, drives people not only to despair but also to new possibilities, to different questions with different answers. Hence the rise of a new spirituality.

In chapter three Wells treats the changing climate of American culture through immigration, which is bringing with it the rise of old, non-Christian religions. Couple this with a new quest for the spiritual, and an amazingly complex religious landscape emerges. Christianity is one voice among many. Wells bids the church to give diligence to the things of God. Back to the Bible! Back to dependence upon grace and the Holy Spirit! The

Spirit illumines and gives life. God's grace alone conquers. Such is the path for the church to follow in the current wilderness.

Given that multireligious context, Wells spells out his proposed program to bring the gospel into that context in chapters four through six: "Christ in a Spiritual World," "Christ in a Meaningless World," and "Christ in a Decentered World." To that *spiritual world* the church brings Christ, living out the gospel of Christ before that world. Moreover, to that *meaningless world* the church brings the vision of the Kingdom of God—that is, she brings the reality of the eschatological reign of God, inaugurated in Jesus Christ, seen with the eyes of faith, centered in the Cross of Christ; that Kingdom is moving us beyond "this age" and refocuses meaning where it belongs, in the Triune God himself. And to that *decentered world* the church brings the biblical (classical) doctrine of God—that doctrine recenters human life on God as sovereign and Christ as Lord, and challenges human autonomy in every form. Life lived under the divine will is life in fellowship with our Creator and Redeemer—a life, to be sure, currently lived in the tension of the "already but not yet," but the "not yet" guaranteed because of the "already." The center of life is the Sovereign Christ, under his grace, his guidance, his truth.

Chapter seven of Wells' book illustrates the challenges and the outcomes of these alternative visions as they come to expression in the contemporary evangelical church. Here he focuses upon megachurches, which have given us paradigm shifts in worship (where seeker-sensitivity and consumer entertainment models rule) and offering us new paradigms of gated (spiritual) communities based upon the homogenous unit principle. This model produces packs of the like-minded, separated by ethnicity, class, and income—"birds of a feather...." None of the above, however, follows the biblical witness. For, as Wells has reminded readers before, in the Bible Christianity isn't marketed and faith isn't for sale. As the mainline churches have suffered steady decline over the last fifty years, failing to distinguish and separate themselves from the world and its worldliness, now, and increasingly, evangelical churches are following suit and suffering similar stagnation.

Consider the shift in worship. The church brings post-modern people into a worship setting that plays not only to their musical tastes but also to their dispositions and narcissism. This certainly qualifies as good marketing and works. Moreover, the strategy has a pay-off, tangible results—such churches are, after all, *megachurches*. They work hard to follow plan, every feature of worship is well-orchestrated and rehearsed in an effort to serve up a week-by-week spiritual extravaganza. But, laments Wells, the authority structure is gone. Although God and Scripture are not ignored, they are displaced. And that is the classic recipe for the vacuous, form without substance, so that Christ isn't really Lord of the project. This means, then, that the impressive edifice of the megachurch-movement is a house composed of straw and stubble, and straw and stubble cannot survive the flames of judgment. Marketing the church is nothing less than contextualization run amuck. Neither God nor culture is to be exploited. God can't be owned. The evangelical church must bring the divine Word through *proclamation*, which in turn, and inevitably, will bring cultural confrontation. But that is the desired thing: Christ confronting the rebellious human heart.

In place of the marketing approach, Wells, in the last chapter of his book, calls the church to authenticity—that is, to a spirituality that is rooted in doctrine and exhibited in practical living, for only from the platform of authenticity, a vital faith community living under the grace of Jesus Christ in the power of the cross, can the church proclaim the gospel without pretentiousness to a skeptical culture of post-moderns. And unless the church strives for authenticity, not mere form, the church's confident assertions about the truth (even assertions from Scripture) will fall on deaf ears.

Pastors in particular will be assisted by Wells' analysis as they seek to bring the gospel not only to the post-moderns without the church and afar off, but also to their own parishioners who have ingested so much of the (post)modern ethos.

Wells' book, then, is a plea for the church today to embrace and follow the program offered by the Apostle Paul, when he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of

God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” Christ, indeed, is above all earthly powers.

—J. Mark Beach

D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. 192. ISBN 0-8010-2713-6 \$16.99.

This book is the first volume in a new series by Baker Academic, edited by D. H. Williams, entitled *Evangelical Ressourcement: Ancient Sources for the Church’s Future*. This series seeks to help church leaders reappropriate the wealth of theological, exegetical, and spiritual resources from the patristic era and to apply them to ministry in the twenty-first century.

In this first volume, D. H. Williams, a professor of religion in patristics and historical theology at Baylor University, seeks to give a rationale for this new series by pointing out the normative role of the early church in shaping the catholic church, i.e., all Christian bodies, even evangelical protestants. The point of this book is not to defend tradition or its place within Christianity, for indeed the author claims that there is no need to do so. “For nearly a millennium and a half, the Christian tradition has offered direction to believers of all communions and affiliations on how they should interpret the Bible, what they should know about God, and how to understand the essentials of Christ’s person and work. The task here is much simpler: to show the origins of this tradition and how it was received as an authoritative guide by the earliest centuries of Christians. The intent of this book, therefore, is not to argue for the legitimacy of tradition but to illuminate its place within Christian thought and practice so that Protestants of all stripes can see the value and necessity of its resources for appropriating the faith today” (18). Williams defines tradition as “those elements of any Christian affiliation or denomination that govern its understanding” (24). For his purposes tradition is

limited to “*the* tradition, the foundational legacy of apostolic and patristic faith, most accurately enshrined in Scripture and secondarily in the great confessions and creeds of the early church” (24). The early church is characterized as the church immediately following the apostles and continuing for five or six hundred years—the patristic age. “This is the era in which the formulation of Christian doctrine, canonization, and the interpretation of the Bible took place, making it ‘ground zero’ for the way in which all subsequent ages of the Church have defined themselves” (25).

In preparation for the rest of the book, the first chapter shows the origination of tradition and its basic components. The next three chapters seek to alleviate some of the major interpretive issues that Protestants have had with tradition: Chapter 2 deals with the “canonical” authority of tradition; while, chapters 3 and 4 examine the relationship between the tradition and the distinctive Protestant traditions of *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Fide* respectively. The final chapter is a brief review of the various resources of the ancient tradition, which most readers who are not familiar with the patristic church will find very beneficial. The book also contains a helpful two-page bibliography of all the patristic resources available in English in print and on the internet.

Williams’ book has many valuable and helpful insights that will no doubt stimulate greater interest in the early church as he points today’s church to the full-orbed Christianity of its ancestors. I have much sympathy for Williams’ desire to see the evangelical church, which is highly programmatic and doctrinally very weak, return to a more robust Christianity.

The one point of criticism I have of Williams’ argument is his labeling this early church tradition “canonical” (51-53). Although he vigorously maintains that it does not undermine the “unique place of Scripture’s authority” (57) and that “the tradition was not ... a separate and second revelatory source” (93), calling it “canonical” raises many questions and unnecessarily complicates his argument, forcing him to make numerous qualifications. It would have been better not to apply that term to the early church tradition at all, since it is possible to hold to a high view of the

authoritative character of the patristic age for the catholic church as the example of the Reformers clearly show (120-124).

—Jacques Roets

Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview*. 2nd editon. Postscript by Michael W. Goheen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. Pp. 155. ISBN 0-8028-2969-4 \$12.00.

This book is a revision of a book that first appeared 20 years ago. In this second edition Al Wolters is joined by a colleague, Dr. Michael Goheen (recently of Redeemer University College, now teaching at Trinity Western University). Dr. Wolters himself is a professor of religion, theology, and classical languages at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada. Wolters and Goheen express their indebtedness to N.T. Wright, missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, Herman Ridderbos, J.H. Bavinck, among others, for some of their thoughts regarding seeing the metanarrative of the Bible (a favorite hermeneutical subject in recent years) as well as the missiological import of this metanarrative. This comes through quite clearly in the Goheen postscript, an addition to this second edition. Another slight difference with the first edition is that Wolters has softened the way he described “the distinctiveness of the reformational worldview in comparison with other Christian traditions” (ix). Wolters judges that this book is an “excellent companion volume” now to *The Drama of Scripture* (written by Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen).

One might easily read this book as a kind of primer on the subject of worldview. But what is meant by worldview? Wolters defines *worldview* as “the comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things” (2). Each element of such a definition is important in that a worldview deals with a very fundamental system of beliefs about the reality in which a person lives and works. He elaborates: “A worldview is a matter of the shared everyday experience of humankind, an inescapable component of

all human knowing, and as such it is nonscientific, or rather (since scientific knowing is always dependent on the intuitive knowing of our everyday experience) *prescientific*, in nature” (10).

The Christian, in distinction from all other religious viewpoints, takes Scripture as the basic starting point in one’s instruction regarding worldview, and the Scripture lays out a basic story line of God’s good creation, a radical fall into sin, and redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. This triad of foci points (sometimes elaborated on with the addition of a fourth, namely, the consummation of all things in the kingdom of God in the new creation) is a familiar arrangement of the narrative line from Genesis through Revelation. The book then lays out in a very straightforward way a more extended discussion of creation, fall, and redemption.

Wolters begins his discussion on creation by addressing the role of the “law of creation” (13ff.). Here the author runs risk of confusion, given the fact the term *law* is a traditional theological term, also in Reformational terminology, but it also has a range of meanings (like “creation”) that may be confusing if used without precise definition and consistent usage (20). Some of the “reformational Christians” of the 1960s and 1970s were criticized for such confusing use. Wolters stays with the term, however, defining it as “the totality of God’s ordaining acts toward the cosmos” (15). The phrase “word of God,” on the other hand, is restricted in his use to refer to “God’s message of sin and grace expressed in human language, and... to the Scriptures themselves” (23). Given the great variety of Biblical use of the term *law*, especially in the New Testament’s Pauline corpus, confusion may easily result if one fails to keep the author’s own particular definitions in mind.

God’s creation, Wolters rightly affirms, is good from the beginning, and it is given structure in complete accordance with God’s law-word. By this law God *norms* the creation and governs it. Such is discernible in observing creation itself and even Gentiles “have a sense of its normative demands” (28), a point that Wolters says Paul affirms in Romans 2:14-15 (a passage that is subject to different interpretation by some Pauline scholars).

Some of God's law-word for creation is not subject to human alteration (e.g., gravity), but others (which he calls *norms*) require to be positivized by human beings. The debate concerning this point is focused on how well such norms in creation can be discerned by Christians (to say nothing about unbelievers). Can such norms be clearly known, if known at all? Wolters (33ff.) is aware of the debate, even in Christian circles. Scripture, to the extent it reveals such norms (in harmony with creation itself), is our indispensable guide, but the specifics about the positivization of norms also require spiritual wisdom and perception, earnest prayer, and working together with other Christians (the communal dimension of Christian obedience).

The fall into sin is rightly seen as a covenantal act in which the entire creational order is brought into condemnation with the entire human race (53ff.). Wolters writes, "Human disobedience and guilt lie in the last analysis at the root of all the troubles on earth. That the fall is at the root of evil is most clear for specifically human evil as it is manifested... in personal, cultural, and societal distortions" (55-6). Even the nonhuman world is touched by sin (cf. Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:19-22). Sin is described as a parasite that attaches itself to the good creation (57). This is one analogy. Death is another, but that reality is not used by Wolters in any extended fashion. The author also affirms that sin does not, even cannot, obliterate the goodness of creation in the sense that God maintains the created order, despite the ravishes of sin (58, 60). Sin "does not belong" in God's good creation; it is something quite alien to what God made.

On the subject of redemption, Wolters rightly underscores the cosmic dimensions of Christ's work. Re-creation is not limited to one narrow area of creation since man was appointed head of the whole creation under God, and the entire creation is subject to frustration and the effects of the divine curse. Says Wolters, "Redemption is not a matter of an addition of a spiritual or supernatural dimension to creaturely life that was lacking before; rather, it is a matter of bringing new life and vitality to what was there all along" (71). In addition, this restoration of mankind and creation is not a going back to the garden of Eden, as

if Christ came for repristination. We started in the garden, but the goal is to bring the saved to the renewed city of God.

Another often used analogy is the one made popular by Oscar Cullmann: Christ's first coming marks a definitive "invasion" of the realm held by Satan (cf. D-Day in June, 1944), but the second coming of Christ and the last judgment will mark the completion of his victory (V-Day in 1945). History now unfolds between these two comings of Christ. "Already" the end of the ages have fallen upon us, but there is "not yet" (or, better, the "more to come") the full reality of the consummate state of a new creation.

Such renewal and restoration bring changes to people on personal levels but also in the societal realm. God's creational ground-rules provide the norms for institutions such as the family, the church, the state, etc., and such norms are violated at the peril of the institution in particular and society at large. In this regard Wolters (p. 99) summarizes the Kuyperian notion of "sphere sovereignty" (what Wolters calls "differentiated responsibility" and what this reviewer would call "sphere responsibility"). The various institutions have a unique calling before God, even as they stand next to other, responsible to carry out the task that God gives to them, positivizing the norms that pertain to their sphere. When one particular sphere dominates and inappropriately controls another sphere of life, the result is totalitarianism. Another evil is when God's norms are not followed or are implemented in a perverted way (100).

Wolters takes his discussion to the thornier area of personal renewal, and here he discusses how the structure/direction distinction might help break through some questions that have perhaps been stymied as "false dilemmas." The areas of human life that he addresses are that of aggression, spiritual gifts (both the extraordinary and the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit), sexuality, and dance (100ff.).

Structure and direction are fundamental in Wolters's discussion, a point to which he comes back repeatedly (e.g., 96), and to which he devotes his fifth chapter. Structural maintenance of creation, rooted in God's faithfulness, is what accounts for sin not completely bringing destruction upon the entirety of creation

“common grace,” or better, “conserving grace”). Indeed chapter five is devoted to a fuller discussion (“Discerning Structure and Direction”). This chapter further defines what *reformational* means. One obvious referent is the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century and its recovery of the doctrines of sovereign grace. But Wolters also defines *reformational* as sanctification, genuine inner renewal, and a change that repudiates revolution, understood as a sweeping destruction of any given order. Reformational Christianity is anti-revolutionary. Tradition is viewed positively but without slipping over into conservatism (94). Wolters thus steers a careful course between the proverbial Scylla and Charybdis. He says that “our focus on structure rejects a sympathy for revolution, and our focus on direction condemns a quietistic conservatism” (94). Wolters is strong on asserting that coming at questions and problems with the (creational) structure and (spiritual) direction in mind may help to frame such questions and problems in a way that may move us along more profitably. How one puts the question often determines the route to a satisfying solution.

Wolters also notes how the reformational worldview differs with other views within the Christian tradition (e.g., pietism, kingdom-is-church, Dispensationalism, liberal Protestantism, etc.). His discussion here is far too brief, but it alerts the reader to the fact that not all Christians think in the same way about worldview, and that starting principles play a pivotal role in anyone’s consideration of larger issues in personal and communal life (78ff.).

The final postscript is where Goheen and Wolters tie the worldview discussion in with the church’s calling and mission in the world. Because the gospel power of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God have “decisively broken into creation” (120), the people of God must now engage this world by communicating this gospel to that world. The gospel is described as a redirecting power, it is *restorative*, and *comprehensive* in its scope (121). It fulfills the long *story* of the Old Testament (indeed, the biblical story is likened to a play in six acts), and the church (the people of God) is essential to the gospel (122). The postscript plays a fitting role in

the discussion that moves the reader from seeing the framework of a reformational worldview to seeing how it mediates the gospel to this world that has been broken by sin.

One particular helpful feature of the book is that Wolters ends each chapter with a summary of the main points he has developed in the chapter. In this way he ties his discussion together.

This book will be welcomed by those who want to receive an easy-to-read statement on what a Christian worldview entails, and it will be welcomed by those who need a refresher course on a Reformed perspective in the “first things” of the big picture of a Scriptural view of life in this creation. The book has excellent potential among evangelical Christian students who need to think well about the Lordship of Christ in all of life, in accordance with the narrative line presented by the sacred Scriptures themselves. It is left to the specialists to spell out more fully the implications and the descriptions of the particulars to which Wolters and Goheen allude in this book.

The book lacks an index, which likely would be helpful to the reader searching for the discussion on a particular idea.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

