

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

Review: Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). 1056 pages. Hardcover. ISBN-13: 9780310286042. \$49.99. Reviewed by Wes Bredenhof, Th.D., Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ontario.

The author of this volume needs no introduction. Michael Horton is a prolific author and popular speaker. Through the White Horse Inn radio program, he has been instrumental in introducing Reformation theology to many. *The Christian Faith* has long been anticipated as a potential classic in its field. Does it live up to the hype?

At the outset, there are two noticeable features of this systematic theology. The first is its massive size. The text in this volume extends to nearly 1000 pages. Readers will therefore come to it with high expectations for depth of treatment. Generally they will not be disappointed.

The second immediately noticeable feature is that it brings together several strains of interrelated thoughts that have been percolating in Michael Horton's mind for some years. Those who have read other volumes by this author will find familiar names and themes throughout. What is new here is the way in which Horton attempts to draw these together into a coherent system.

Digging deeper into it, one discovers that *The Christian Faith* is not just another systematic theology in the vein of Hodge, Berkhof, or Reymond. Horton's unique goal is the integration of biblical theology with historical and systematic theology. The biblical theology comes to the fore more than anything else. *The Christian Faith* is what one gets when a student of Meredith Kline writes a systematic theology. In

RESPONSES critical of articles and reviews may be submitted for consideration for publication by sending drafts to the editorial address. Please contact the Reviews editor, Lane Keister (ReviewEditor@cpjournal.com), beforehand to obtain submission requirements and preferences. When possible, the subject of a negative or possibly controversial review may be contacted beforehand for any appropriate response for publication along with the review, and the reviewer will be given an opportunity for a response. If required, responses and replies may continue in subsequent issues.

1. "The event of one's writing, uttering, or otherwise signifying something is called the *locutionary act*. What we do through such signifying is referred to as the *illocutionary act* (or force). That which is brought about in the hearer as a result is its *perlocutionary effect*." *The Christian Faith*, 119.

fact, as we will see further in this review, the fingerprints of Kline are all over this volume.

Each chapter is designed along the lines of the rubric of drama, doctrine, doxology, and discipleship. With this approach, Horton hopes to challenge "the modern dichotomy between doctrine and life, theology and discipleship, knowing and doing, [and] theory and practice" (14). His hope is to demonstrate concretely the relevance of systematic theology.

Covenant theology features prominently. Of course, this covenant theology is that taught by Meredith Kline. Thus, Horton continues to assert that biblical covenants have their roots in ancient near-eastern suzerainty treaties. One finds the strong distinction between a covenant of grace and a pre-fall covenant of works, and the recapitulation of this covenant of works at Sinai.

Another important feature of *The Christian Faith* is its self-consciously Trinitarian approach. For example, Horton discusses the work of the Spirit in the movement from creation to consummation. He states, "The age to come is Christ's to win; it is the Father's to give and it is the Spirit's to actually bring into the present, even in the midst of this present evil age" (553). Throughout this volume, Horton is making efforts to ensure that each person of the Trinity receives due attention individually and taken as one whole.

Also noteworthy here is the incorporation of philosophical and linguistic perspectives. Readers of his previous four-volume set of dogmatics published by Westminster John Knox will recognize his covenant ontology of "meeting a stranger," as opposed to "overcoming estrangement" and "the stranger we never meet." Once again we also find an emphasis on speech act theory and the distinction between illocutionary, locutionary, and perlocutionary acts.¹

Strengths

Horton endeavours to be biblical and exegetical in *The Christian Faith*, and this is to be applauded. Since biblical theology is the defining feature of this systematic theology, there can be little question that the author takes Scripture seriously. His view on Scripture is orthodox and falls in line with the views found in the Reformed confessions. He affirms verbal plenary inspiration and infallibility. There is a lengthy discussion of inerrancy in chapter 4 with an eye to old Princeton and Karl Barth. Horton concludes that "the inerrancy doctrine invites legitimate questions and critiques. However, its alternatives are less satisfying. Whatever the holy, unerring and faithful Father speaks is—simply by virtue of having come from him—holy, unerring, and faithful" (184).

This volume is also commendable for its sensitivity to historical theology. Throughout, Horton engages figures from the past in meaningful ways. Most prominent amongst these figures is John Calvin, with Augustine coming a close

second. Along these same lines, we can note with gratitude that Horton gives far more than lip service to the Reformed confessions. Especially the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards are taken seriously and used as touchstones of orthodoxy. This is a confessional theology.

Seldom (if ever) does one encounter a systematic theology with an eye fixed on Christian mission. The missionary calling of the church, however, is worked in throughout *The Christian Faith*. Some of the reflections in this regard are surprising and thought-provoking. Take this for example:

...a genuinely missional church should provoke a disrupting encounter with a holy and gracious God not only in its preaching and teaching, but in the regular celebration of the Supper. Why should the Supper be celebrated so infrequently and, in many cases, at an evening service where visitors are less likely to attend (and therefore, to be offended, perplexed, convicted, or intrigued)? (901)

In the field of missiology, one never encounters the idea that the sacraments also have a missionary function. This is an excellent insight.

Readers will also appreciate the fact that Horton interacts with a wide range of theologians from a variety of backgrounds. Some of his most noteworthy interlocutors include N. T. Wright, Wayne Grudem, Joseph Ratzinger, Stanley Grenz, and (especially) Karl Barth. Various theological movements are analyzed and helpfully critiqued, including Radical Orthodoxy and the New Perspective on Paul. It is remarkable, however, that the Federal Vision and associated figures are conspicuously absent throughout. Consequently there is no explicit critique of this controversial school of thought, but one could argue that it is indirectly subverted at various places.

One of my critiques of Horton's *People and Place* was that he failed to give proper attention to the marks of the church: the pure preaching of the Word, the faithful administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline. *The Christian Faith*, however, does not fail in this regard. For instance, Horton points out that there has been a tendency to make a false dilemma between the marks and mission. However, he rightly insists, the church grows by the same means through which the church is created and sustained (901).

All the Protestant Reformers were agreed that Christians are at the same time justified and sinful: *simul iustus et peccator*. This doctrine later came under attack in Protestantism, especially after the likes of Charles Finney. Today it continues to be under pressure. One of the best sections in *The Christian Faith* is found in chapter 20, where Horton defends this doctrine both against overrealized and underrealized eschatologies. Addressing the latter, Horton offers this valuable insight: "God's work frees us for the first time for the pursuit of the

very source of truth, goodness, and beauty. Simultaneously justified and sinful, we are also simultaneously renewed and sinful. Though less complete than justification, the renewal is no less definitive" (659).

Last of all under this heading, readers will appreciate the helpful charts in this volume. For instance, chapter 8 includes a chart outlining views of the Trinity (279). Similarly, chapter 24 has a chart of eucharistic views (823). However, there are no charts in the part of the book treating eschatology.

Weaknesses/Criticisms

Unfortunately, some parts of *The Christian Faith* are difficult to get into. The author does not always employ the most lucid or engaging prose. It is not readily accessible to readers lacking formal training in theology. It seems to be pitched towards other scholars and pastors with a scholarly bent, but even these may find parts of this book tough going.

A moment ago, the rubric of Drama, Doctrine, Doxology, and Discipleship was mentioned. However, Horton does not consistently follow through with this rubric for each chapter. Moreover, some of the chapters also fail to follow through with their stated intentions at the beginning. One of the most glaring examples is in chapter 15. Horton states that this chapter is going to focus on Christ's three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king. However, the royal office does not receive any significant attention until the next chapter. Likely the introduction to chapter 15 should have stated that the three-fold office was going to be treated over this chapter and the next one.

Moving on to some more important concerns, as expected, Horton has some chapters dealing with creation in general and the creation of man in particular. It is peculiar that he does not take the opportunity to reject forthrightly the Darwinian theory of origins. However, Horton does state, "Whatever one's conclusions concerning the process of human origins, Christian theology stands or falls with a historical Adam and a historical fall" (424). Horton seems to be stating that one can hold to a Darwinian theory of origins so long as the historicity of Adam and the fall are affirmed. The problems here relate to Horton's acceptance of Kline's Framework Hypothesis with regard to the first chapters of Genesis. The author's church federation (the United Reformed Churches of North America) explicitly ruled in 2001 that one can hold to the Framework Hypothesis, so long as no ground is given to Darwinism. Horton is unambiguous in his endorsement of Framework, but he is less clear on where he stands with regard to Darwinism. Parts of *The Christian Faith* regurgitate previous material from the author. In *People and Place*, Horton had argued that, using Meredith Kline's "intrusion ethics" approach, it is inappropriate for Christians to sing or pray the imprecatory Psalms. This comes back in the eschatological locus:

The imprecatory Psalms, invoking God's judgment on enemies, are appropriate on the lips of David and the martyrs in heaven. However, they are entirely out of place on the lips of Christians today, guided as we are not by the ethics of intrusion but by the ethics of common grace. Therefore, moderns are wrong for dismissing such episodes as immoral, and fundamentalists are wrong for invoking them as if they were in effect during this intermission between Christ's two advents. (961–962)

This argument fails in at least two respects. First, it fails to account for the use of imprecatory Psalms against Satan and all his host. Surely, they are not out of place on the lips of Christians today in that regard. Second, it fails to account for the varied ways in which God can eliminate his enemies. Saul of Tarsus is the most compelling example. God destroyed this enemy and raised up an apostle.

Most discomfiting of all, however, is Horton's flirtation with Eastern Orthodoxy. He first introduced us to the essence/energies distinction in *Covenant and Salvation*, and here in *The Christian Faith* it is found in every locus. The distinction is between God's essence (his hidden and inaccessible being) and his energies (his revealed and gracious works). This distinction originated with the Cappadocian fathers, but became especially associated with Gregory Palamas. Horton argues that this distinction has been widely accepted and employed especially by Reformation (e.g., Calvin) and post-Reformation theologians (e.g., Turretin). However, he fails to inform readers that this distinction has been controversial in the history of theology. It has been critiqued extensively by western theologians, especially Roman Catholics, because of its subtle compromise of the simplicity of God. From the Presbyterian side, Robert Letham has critiqued this distinction too, and his words are worth quoting at length here:

Gregory Palamas' development of the distinction between the unknowable essence (being) of God and his energies has won widespread approval. However, this drives a wedge between the immanent and economic trinities, between God in himself and God as he has revealed himself. This threatens our knowledge of God with a profound agnosticism, since we have no way of knowing whether God is as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. It also defies rational discourse, since we cannot say anything about who God is. The acme of the Christian life becomes mystical contemplation rather than *fides quarens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding)...The point here is that this is not merely a development from the Cappadocians, whose work led to the resolution of the trinitarian crisis. It

2. Robert Letham, *Through Western Eyes, Eastern Orthodoxy: A Reformed Perspective* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor/Christian Focus, 2007), 283–284.

is more than that—it is a distortion of the classic doctrine of the trinity. It introduces into God a division, not a distinction. As Dorothea Wendebourg comments, it results in the persons of the trinity having no soteriological functions. The classic doctrine affirmed that the three persons, each and together are the one God. By introducing a new level in God, the trinitarian settlement is undermined. It is the defeat of trinitarian theology.²

So while Horton is orthodox in his doctrine of the Trinity, his acceptance of this essence/energies distinction could potentially do damage down the road. Moreover, the acceptance of this distinction figures into his analysis and positive evaluation of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* or deification. He argues that *theosis* refers to humans being united to God's energies, but not to his essence.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether Reformation and post-Reformation theologians accepted or employed this distinction. For instance, Polanus stated that "God's essential attributes are really his very essence." He stated further that "there is nothing in God which is not either essence or person" (*Syntagma* 2.7). God's attributes belong to his essence. We know of God's attributes since God has revealed them to us. Clearly then, we do not know God *merely* according to his energies or outward works. Furthermore, some of his attributes are actively directed outwards towards others, so this distinction necessarily falls apart. While one can commend Horton for attempting to be catholic in his approach, the introduction of the essence/energies distinction seems to bring a foreign and incompatible element into Reformed theology.

Finally, there are various typos and other formatting and editing errors scattered throughout. Hopefully a future edition can remedy these.

Conclusion

This volume is not going to be a replacement at seminaries for Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, nor is it really intended to be. Parts of it are more accessible than others (and it does include a helpful glossary and annotated bibliography), but generally this is not "theology for the masses." It will probably be most useful for higher level theology courses and as supplementary reading to sharpen the theological acumen of pastors and scholars.

The Christian Faith is an expansive and thorough systematic theology. Even with (or maybe even because of) his idiosyncrasies, Horton makes a good conversation partner. There is a lot here with which one can engage, and undoubtedly this book will be discussed for many years to come. It could be Horton's magnum opus, but given his prodigious writing that may be a premature judgment. ■

Review: Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) xix, 539 pages. \$131. ISBN 9780521470124. Reviewed by James E. Dolezal (Ph.D.), Research Fellow at The Craig Center for the Study of the Westminster Standards, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

Remythologizing Theology (RT) is Kevin Vanhoozer's delivery on a promise made more than a decade ago to write an extended treatise on the doctrine of God. Up to this point, he acknowledges, his many previous volumes have been chiefly concerned with theological methodology (e.g., *First Theology*, IVP, 2002; *The Drama of Doctrine*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2005). Now he endeavors to show what sort of theology his method yields. Vanhoozer's overarching aim is to set forth "a communicative ontology (i.e., a set of concepts with which to speak of God-in-communicative-action)" and to sketch "the contours of a theodramatic metaphysics (i.e., a biblically derived set of concepts with which to speak of the whole of created reality)" (xv). Specifically, he intends to accomplish this by focusing on "the nature of the relationship established by the dialogical interaction between God and humanity and its implications for the doctrine of God" (xvii).

The volume's nine chapters are divided into three distinct sections: (I) "God" in Scripture and theology (chs. 1–3); (II) Communicative theism and the triune God (chs. 4–5); and (III) God and the World: authorial action and interaction (chs. 6–9). I will first set out an overview of the volume and then consider some of its outstanding virtues and deficiencies.

Overview

It is of first importance that one understands what Vanhoozer means by "remythologizing." Certainly the term is meant to be provocative and create interest. The author devotes his entire introduction to explaining his terminology and its implications for Christian theologizing. He carefully distinguishes between "myths," which are merely human stories meant to explain or illustrate some universal, cosmic, or divine reality, and *mythos*, which is a story "that concerns doers (agents) and the done-to (sufferers)" (5). It is a return to the divinely-authored biblical *mythos* (i.e., the Bible as God's own spoken record of redemptive history) that Vanhoozer advocates over against Rudolph Bultmann's "soft" demythologizing (which still believes that the human "myth" of Scripture points to a God beyond the text) and Ludwig Feuerbach's "hard" demythologizing (which insists that the "myth" of Scripture points *only* back to man as the myth-maker); neither of these thoroughly modern approaches does justice to the Bible as God's own self-revelation in history. Remythologizing, then, "is a proposal for integrating exegesis, biblical theology, and

systematic theology by attending to God's self-communication in the history and literature of Israel and the church and above all in the person and history of Jesus Christ" (30). It is a theological enterprise that begins with the Word of God rather than the word of man.

Part I. Vanhoozer is concerned in chapter 1 to show that God acts and reveals himself in history by speaking. Thus, in order to understand God's being ("He who is"), it is argued, one must first understand God as a dialogical agent ("He who speaks"). The categories of being are derived from God's speech-acts in Scripture, that is, from "theodrama." Vanhoozer writes, "A theodramatic metaphysics begins with the speech and acts of God, inquiring what God must *be* to have *said* and *done that*" (79). It is the author's conviction that traditional substance metaphysics is not sufficient to explain God's being and so must be displaced by a new metaphysics derived from a consideration of God's acts and speech in history. In chapter 2 Vanhoozer examines various ways in which Western theologians have sought to relate the biblical data to a theology of God's being. This is a fairly straightforward survey ranging from classical theism (which the author exonerates from overly-simplistic accusations of Hellenization) to recent versions of panentheism. In chapter 3 Vanhoozer criticizes the "new orthodoxy" of "kenotic-perichoretic relational ontology" which teaches that God's very being is caused and conditioned by his relationship to the world. "The way forward," Vanhoozer concludes, "beyond relational theism or panentheism and back to something more like classical theism, is to think through God's love and being, in terms of neither impersonal causality nor personal mutuality alone but rather in terms of communicative and self-communicative action" (176–177).

Part II. Vanhoozer begins in chapter 4 to set down some of his positive proposals, perhaps best summed up in the chapter's title: God's being is in communicating. "To remythologize theology (and metaphysics in general)," he explains, "is to put our discourse of *what is* under the discipline of the biblical accounts of God's speaking and acting" (181–182). In order to achieve this he weaves various strands of classical theism (notably, Aquinas's insistence that God is pure act) together with certain elements of Karl Barth's understanding of God's being as rooted in his self-communication in Christ (198–222). Between Aquinas and Barth, it is clearly Barth whom Vanhoozer finds most useful. "As Thomas corrects Aristotle by attending to the implicit metaphysics of the Exodus (and the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*)," he writes, "so Barth corrects Aquinas by attending to the implicit metaphysics of the Incarnation and resurrection" (217). He advises "returning to Aquinas via Barth" (217). In chapter 5 the author turns from his discussion of God's being in relation to the world to the "communicative agency of the three divine persons" (241). His basic thrust is to argue that God who is light, life, and love

in se communicates that light, life, and love *ad extra* to the world. The God who shows his being via communication in history is the one who communicates *essentially*, within his eternal three-personed existence. Thus, Vanhoozer concludes, dialogical communication is the very being and essence of God: “the economic Trinity is, or rather *communicates*, the immanent Trinity” (294).

Part III. Chapter 6 examines God’s action and interaction with the world, what Vanhoozer calls God’s *dialogical* authorship. “My thesis,” he writes, “is that triune authorship is best viewed in terms of communicative rather than strategic action, and that communicative action is best understood in conjunction with [Mikhail] Bakhtin’s dialogical conception of authorship” (317). Chapter 7 enlarges upon the authorship thesis by exploring its potential effects upon such traditional concerns as God’s sovereignty, human freedom, evil, and prayer. A central component of the chapter is Vanhoozer’s insistence that the older paradigm of “instrumental” causation be replaced by a model of “communicative” causation. He applies this to the question of God’s agency in effectual calling and concludes that God effects internal change through perlocutionary force that works in and through the personhood of the one called, rather than by a mechanical force that operates upon or against the person (372). In chapters 8 and 9 Vanhoozer applies his remythologizing method to divine suffering and compassion respectively. He plainly rejects the notion of divine passibility that depicts God as being acted upon passively by agents beyond his control. Interestingly, though, he is agreeable in some sense to the notion of divine suffering so long as God is the one controlling it, the one *authoring* it. So, for example, he can write, “The incarnation and cross alike indicate that God is the one who freely pours out his own life for others” Moreover, “If the cross is indeed the paradigm instance of divine suffering, then we must conclude that God never suffers because he is overtaken by worldly events, but only because he uses them for his own authorial purposes” (430).

As for God’s compassion, Vanhoozer frames his discussion with the question: “Is God unmoved (Anselm), moved (relational theists and panentheists), or self-moved (Barth) by human suffering?” (434) He takes the Barthian explanation to be most faithful to the divine metaphysics he derives from the biblical narrative. As with suffering, his main concern is to say that God is *free* and in *control* of his feelings of compassion and empathy: “It is a commanding compassion, first, because it is *self-moved*” (446). In Vanhoozer’s hands, divine impassibility and immobility do not strictly mean that God cannot suffer and is somehow immobile; rather, those doctrines simply mean that no one other than God himself can author his suffering and movement. In his conclusion Vanhoozer affirms that God is ontologically self-authored:

“Author’ approximates God’s self-designation: ‘I am who I am’ means ‘I am my own author,’ or ‘I author, therefore I am,’ or perhaps simply ‘I, author.’ In any case authorship is the remythologized equivalent for expressing the so-called sovereignty-aseity conviction” (485).

Remythologizing Theology is a mixed bag of classical Reformed affirmations blended together with elements of Barthianism and panentheism. As such, it invites a number of criticisms from a classical Reformed perspective. Before offering such criticisms I will set out two of the volume’s strong points.

Virtues

Two notable virtues of *RT* deserve consideration: (1) Vanhoozer’s emphasis upon the primacy of divine revelation for the theological enterprise; and (2) his many sound criticisms leveled against various modern relational theologies.

The Primacy of Divine Revelation

Throughout *RT* Vanhoozer alerts readers to the danger of “Feuerbachian slips” (17–23). It was the view of Feuerbach that the primary speaker in theology is man. Indeed, he insisted that man is the only speaker and all theology is really anthropology, man projecting *himself* in a myth about God. Vanhoozer warns, “The temptation to project one’s own interests, values, and categories onto God is a dangerous toxin in the bloodstream of theology” (388). The author reckons this to be one of the great failures in many recent theological systems such as panentheism, open theism, social trinitarianism, and other such relational theologies. These systems presuppose humans and their particular concerns (e.g., about relationality, friendship, suffering, and love) should direct and shape theological discourse. Vanhoozer counters with sound advice: “Those who deign to speak of God, whether metaphysically or not, could avoid many problems if they learned not to speak until spoken to” (182). God sets the agenda for theology in his own self-disclosure. “Only God can make God known” (24). This conviction grounds the author’s call for a return to the primacy of divine revelation in our theologizing.

Criticism of Modern Relational Theologies

Another related strong suit of *RT* is Vanhoozer’s criticism of the modern turn toward relationality as the guiding principle in theology. He remarks, “The concept of relationality is notoriously ambiguous...covering a multitude of conceptual sins” (139). Besides its inherent ambiguity, Vanhoozer discovers that modern notions of relationality are shot through with the assumption that God and man are univocally related: “From a ‘classical’ vantage point...the main problem with the new relational ontotheology is not its forgetting of the question of being but its forgetting of the Creator-creature distinction” (149). Consider a few examples.

Jürgen Moltmann proposes that the cross “means that Christ’s death is an inter-trinitarian event in which the Father suffers the death of his Son” (109). In view of certain modern tragedies, such as Auschwitz, Moltmann refuses to allow that God is sovereign over human suffering; the only acceptable God of love is one who is a fellow-sufferer with humanity. But Vanhoozer thinks the outlay of this relational turn is too costly: “One wonders whether the cost of affirming suffering love is to abandon the notion of God’s sovereign love, and whether the cost of affirming God’s real relation to the world is to deny his real independence from it” (111–112). As for inter-trinitarian suffering, he observes that “the thrust of the new orthodoxy is to inflate the economic Trinity precisely in order to call into question the aseity and impassibility of God” (112).

The author also evaluates the recent emphasis upon community, in which humans are thought to commune with God in the way that God communes within himself as a Trinity, namely, by perichoresis. The orthodox sense of perichoresis states that the three persons of the Godhead interpenetrate and indwell one another. Social Trinitarians, such as Moltmann and Catherine LaCugna, want to expand that notion of mutual indwelling to include, not just the immanent Trinity, but the world as well. LaCugna’s thought is that perichoresis is the model for human community, including human-to-human, human-to-God, and God-to-human. Vanhoozer rightly objects that this makes God dependent upon the world for his very identity.

The author offers a lengthy evaluation and critique of what he calls “kenotic-perichoretic relational ontology.” This relational perspective on God’s being understands his love to entail a mutual ontological indwelling with the world and sees his supposed suffering “as a necessary consequence of his *kenotic* relatedness” (140). Vanhoozer’s rejection of this thesis is orthodox and to the point: “The problem with the perichoretic analogy is that the God-world relation is fundamentally *not* like the inter-trinitarian communion, for God and creation are not on the same plane of being” (158–159). He continues his criticism of the implicit univocism of relational ontology, writing: “God’s eternal communicative activity *in se* must be distinguished from his activity *ad extra*. The kenotic-perichoretic relational view, by contrast, presupposes a single drama of suffering love that features the interplay of finite and infinite freedom, encompassing the world and God alike” (242).

Reformed readers will undoubtedly appreciate Vanhoozer’s emphasis upon divine revelation and his repeated affirmations of the Creator-creature distinction. Unfortunately, the author fails consistently to apply his orthodox principles to his own proposals. In fact, at times he seems to allow the relationalists to set the theological agenda and thus answers their arguments with his own version of a divine relational ontology. For all

his sound and perceptive criticism, he is ultimately unable to disentangle himself from the relationalist program. In this connection, we turn now to observe a few of the volume’s noteworthy defects.

Deficiencies—*Overly-Restrictive Thesis*

While Vanhoozer’s emphasis upon the priority of God’s self-revelation is most welcome, his insistence upon prioritizing divine *speech-acts* and *theodrama* places undue constraints upon the multitude of ways in which God communicates himself to creatures. It also undermines our ability to say anything about the way God is apart from his relation to creation. In this scheme all that we can know about God’s being and essence is derived from our consideration of him as one *verbally* communicating with creatures. Vanhoozer’s methodological parameters are clear: “[T]his work derives a doctrine of God’s being from an analysis of God’s *speaking*” (11). But certainly God is more than a talker and more than Creator. Much of his self-revelation is non-verbal and tells us something of what God is in himself, apart from his creation of the world and historic-redemptive dealings with humans.

By restricting the relevant data for all theologizing to God’s dialogical *speech-acts* in history, one cannot but feel that Vanhoozer is rigging the rules of inquiry in order to yield the personalist brand of theology that he is bent on discovering. After his solid declaration that only God can make God known, he immediately reduces this revelatory activity to God’s *speech*: “we could know nothing of God or his purposes at all if God were not a *speech agent*, for only *speaking* disambiguates behavior” (24). But this is not quite right. The Bible itself testifies that all men, whether or not they have been made privy to God’s *speech-acts*, know God from the things that are made. Additional *speech* is not needed to disambiguate the message of creation about God’s invisible attributes, eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:21). These are plainly revealed by God in the natural world itself. Is it true that we could know *nothing* of God without some additional *speech*? The apostle Paul seems to say otherwise. The same goes for the moral witness and revelation of God by way of conscience (Rom. 2:14–15). The consequence of Vanhoozer’s proposal is that it seems to obviate the function and effectiveness of natural revelation, to say nothing of the natural theology that redeemed minds may articulate by contemplation of that natural revelation. Vanhoozer calls for a theology that looks only to God in the “historically and canonically concrete” (182). But the canon itself explicitly states that men know God from extra-canonical sources of revelation. *RT* seems to advocate a form of biblicism that even the Bible will not allow. In fine, it undermines natural revelation and those many things we truly know and say about God based upon that form of revelation. It also undercuts the

importance of those aspects of the biblical record that reveal God's non-verbal attributes.

Metaphysics

Another significant shortcoming of *RT* is its whole understanding of the place and function of metaphysics. Vanhoozer proposes remaking metaphysics into a special branch of theology based upon God's actions in redemptive history: "the book relocates metaphysics from its traditional home in ancient Athens to Jerusalem in order to bring reflection about God's being closer to the gospel and its theodramatic context" (25). Further on he states, "A theodramatic metaphysic provides categories for understanding what God has said and done to renew all things in Christ through the Spirit." He denominates this, "the metaphysics of the gospel" (79). Rather than study being-in-general (i.e., being as it is common among creatures), as the older conception of metaphysics proposes, Vanhoozer defines the discipline much more broadly (and vaguely) as "the study of reality beyond mere appearances" (8). The purpose of such an enlarged conception is so that God can be included as one of the *proper* objects of metaphysical inquiry. Vanhoozer believes it to be a singular failing of the older metaphysics that its categories failed to explain genuinely God's essence as well as such redemptive phenomena as Christ's incarnation and resurrection. By deriving the principles and categories of metaphysics from the inspired redemptive "drama" it is thought one can arrive at a single set of "categories for *all that is*" (183). *Prima facie* it may appear that the author rescues metaphysics from the older abstract tendencies apparent in both the medieval and Reformed scholastics. But Vanhoozer's reconception of metaphysical categories as derived from redemptive history is not unproblematic.

First, there is the theoretical question of the propriety of redefining the purpose and scope of a lower science in order to remake it into a properly theological pursuit. Yet this is what Vanhoozer does to metaphysics. He simply declares that its proper object is no longer to be restricted to the commonness of being discovered among creatures, but must now be extended to consider God, creatures, and God's redemptive actions on behalf of creatures. But why not do this with other lower sciences? Why not insist upon a mathematics, chemistry, or biology of the gospel? Should we expect to derive the proper principles and limits for those disciplines from redemptive history as well? Probably Vanhoozer would say we should not. So why insist upon doing it with metaphysics? It may be that Vanhoozer simply rejects the traditional (pre-Enlightenment) claims that metaphysics is a legitimate lower science, in which case making it more properly theological would appear entirely harmless. It bears pointing out, though, that in relocating metaphysics within theology Vanhoozer

also elevates it from its historic *ministerial* role (as philosophy serving theology) to a *magisterial* role (theology itself).

Second, and more importantly, by transforming metaphysics into a proper branch of theology Vanhoozer seems to open the door for the very ontological univocism that he rightly decries elsewhere in his volume. Predicating according to a single set of metaphysical and ontological categories for God and creatures requires one to speak univocally about God and the world. In fact, it is the older metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas and the Reformed scholastics that better preserves the Creator-creature distinction. This is because, for them, metaphysics does not study God as its proper object but as the sufficient reason for and first cause of being-in-general. Thus, their "metaphysical" talk about God is not *properly* metaphysical; they simply reason from the fact of being-in-general to God as the ultimate cause (*via causalitatis*) and exemplar (*via eminentiae*) of being, the one for whom all the limitations of categorical being must be denied (*via remotionis* and *via negationis*). Vanhoozer's metaphysical innovations abandon the carefully nuanced Creator-creature distinction found in Thomas and the Reformed by placing all within a single order of categorical being. The irony is that in attempting to be more biblical in his metaphysical talk about God he actually appears to become less so by letting univocism in the back door.

Third, if a single set of metaphysical categories can explain both God's creative and historic-redemptive activity as well as the common being and ordinary experiences of creatures, it would seem that the *uniqueness* of God's creative action and redemptive miracles is thereby undermined. One should expect, for instance, that the biological, physical, and mathematical sciences could potentially explain such phenomena as creation *ex nihilo*, the incarnation, and the resurrection. After all, it is from these miraculous dramatic events that Vanhoozer insists we must derive the categories for "all that is." Those events themselves must be classifiable within the exact same system by which we classify all other (ordinary) phenomena, thus divesting them of their truly miraculous and extraordinary character.

Effectual Calling

Vanhoozer's account of God's effectual call in salvation highlights his aversion to traditional causal explanations of God's activity in the world. The effectual call, we are told, "provides a lens for understanding how the eternal God acts in time, and thus for how God relates to the world more generally" (371). Specifically, the author notes that God's causal work in effectual calling is a "communicative action" and the result is a "properly *communicative* causal effect" (371). In itself this stress on communicative causality seems perfectly admissible. But for Vanhoozer communicative causality is sharply contrasted to instrumental causality. The effectual call works

communicatively *in* and *through* the sinner's nature and personhood, not *on* or *against* it in some instrumental sense. The author dislikes Calvin's explanation that the Spirit "causes the preached Word to dwell in their hearts" (372; citing *Institutes* III.24.8). He is concerned that such strong instrumental action on God's part "overrides human nature and freedom" (372–373). He wants to ensure that God's operation in calling "in no way bypasses human volition and cognition" (373). This is accomplished, according to Vanhoozer, by the "*communicative force*" of God's "sovereign summons to participate in the light and life of the triune God" (373). God causes a change in the sinner's heart and mind "*precisely by bringing about understanding*" (373). Speech-acts, not instrumental acts of God's Spirit, are the proper way to understand God's causal activity in the effectual call. What are we to make of this thesis?

While not entirely without merit, this account suffers from the author's insistence that one must choose between communicative and instrumental causality. This is a false antithesis. Why could not God's communicative action be identical with, or at least concomitant with, his instrumental action (presuming that instrumental does not necessarily mean mechanical)? It seems that in reality Vanhoozer does allow some measure of divine instrumental causality, even if unwittingly. Consider the following: "The effectual call is the Spirit's ministering the word in such a way that hearers freely and willingly answer God by responding with faith" (374–375). Whatever he means by "in such a way," it is precisely this "way" that apparently causes an unwilling sinner to become a freely willing and believing sinner. The sinner himself is dead in his trespasses and sins, volitionally and noetically depraved and hostile toward God, and is not sufficiently free in that condition to respond to God's sovereign summons. God must act first to *make* the sinner willing through the power of his word and Spirit. This is entirely God's doing. Vanhoozer's anti-instrumentalist characterization of the effectual call subverts the sole priority of God's operation in the production of saving faith in his elect. Moreover, as a model for God's relationship to the world more generally it suggests some sort of ontological synergism between God and his creation. Indeed, this is exactly what one discovers in Vanhoozer's discussion of God's impassibility and compassion.

Divine Impassibility

As noted above in the overview, Vanhoozer upholds divine impassibility insofar as the doctrine teaches that God is not passively moved by the coercive will and power of creatures. But he does not believe that God is impassible in an absolute sense. Indeed, as he explains it, God *does* suffer *as God* by virtue of his own free choice. God authors his own suffering. This argument effectively transforms divine impassibility from a doctrine about the divine nature into a doctrine about divine

sovereignty. What motivates the author to make such a move? Is this explanation within orthodox bounds?

Vanhoozer understands the cross of Christ to be "the paradigm instance of divine suffering" (430). Thus, he writes, "what Jesus communicates in his passion is nothing less than the 'ways of God,' that is, the nature of God's being-in-self-communicative-action" (430). Surely it is appropriate to say that the cross reveals something of God's nature, such as his love, for instance. But does not Vanhoozer go too far when he further suggests that the suffering of the cross reveals the suffering of God *qua* God? He first goes wrong by applying the doctrine of *kenosis* to the whole Godhead rather than strictly to the person of the Son. What's more, he seems to conceive this divine "self-emptying" as something that occurs properly in the divine nature rather than strictly in a divine person (430). This seems dangerously close to heterodoxy. According to Vanhoozer, God allows his divine nature to be ontically acted upon and changed in the course of his historic-redemptive dealings. This seems to violate a host of classical Reformed convictions including divine immutability, simplicity, and aseity, to name a few.

The author reassures us that all is well since he still retains the doctrine of God's sovereignty. But we must ask: What sort of sovereignty is this? Apparently, it is a *self*-sovereignty in which God exercises free control over his own nature. In short, Vanhoozer's conception of divine sovereignty is nothing but a recapitulation of Karl Barth's doctrine of divine freedom. Just as Barth insists that God freely brings about his very being and essence, Vanhoozer holds that God's sovereignty enables him to "author" himself and "move" himself. God may even write himself into the theodrama as a sufferer. One wonders, though, what other roles God might author for himself. If he is sovereign over his own nature could he, for instance, cause himself to be ignorant, weak, corporeal, temporal, mutable, finite, and so on? Are there any limits to God's self-sovereignty?

I submit that this notion that God is sovereign over his own nature and essence is entirely wrongheaded. The doctrine of divine sovereignty is properly understood as God's control over things *ad extra*. God's nature grounds his sovereignty in relation to things outside himself; sovereignty does not control or cause the divine nature itself in any sense. In the end Vanhoozer's revised understanding of divine impassibility is much more Barthian than classically Reformed. Moreover, inasmuch as God becomes something in the theodrama that he was not before, it seems that Vanhoozer's God is ontologically correlative to creation and dependent upon it in some sense in order to realize the being and nature that he has authored for himself.

Conclusion

The deficiencies of this volume ultimately overwhelm its

virtues. The reader frequently gets the sense that the orthodoxy granted by the right hand is taken away by the left. Vanhoozer seems to follow not only Barth's doctrine of God, but also his dialecticism. Though we are warned against univocism, his proposal for a single set of metaphysical categories slips it back in; though we are warned against relational theologies, the author incorporates God's actions in the world into the very definition of his being (297); though divine impassibility is affirmed, we are further informed that God voluntarily allows his very Godhead to undergo suffering; though God's total sovereignty in salvation is confessed, we are also notified that humans are never passive in regeneration. The list of self-contradictions could easily be multiplied. All in all, *Remythologizing Theology* is too prolix, repetitive, vague, and from a traditional Reformed perspective, too Barthian to meet effectively the modern challenges of the various relational theologies.

Response: "On the Scope and Scopis of 'Always Reforming,' A Response to James Dolezal." By Kevin Vanhoozer.

Is the meaning of a text more a function of its author's intended meaning or of its reader's – in this case reviewer's – response? I would say the former, and I think James Dolezal would agree. How then should we explain the fact that his reader response disappointingly fails to coincide with my authorial intention? There are two possibilities: either I have miscommunicated, or Dolezal could do with a refresher course in grammatical-historical interpretation. The truth, however, may lie somewhere in the middle (proof positive, Dolezal would no doubt say, that I am indeed a dialectical, self-contradicting theologian!).

It was my *intent* to write a work of Reformed theology that would critically address several trends in contemporary theology and provide a "retooling" (not displacement) of classical theism and its implied metaphysic. I am Reformed because, among other things, I affirm *sola scriptura*, divine sovereignty (not least in the matter of grace), the soteriological centrality of union with Christ, the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all areas of life, the importance of keeping word and Spirit together, the fecundity of "covenant" as a unifying principle of biblical theology, and the importance of continually reforming the church's doctrine and practice according to the word of God written "for us." I view myself not as an innovator but rather as a translator, one who seeks new language with which to preserve what has been said in the past for the present.

The new conceptual tools I set forth in the book are ones of which I hope Calvin would have approved. He would certainly not have approved of "a mixed bag of classical Reformed affirmations blended together with elements of Barthianism and panentheism," so of course I dispute this description of

my proposal. The book is the last in the series *Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine*. The series required me to locate and make sense of traditional Christian doctrines in a contemporary context. That was my mandate. It helps to know the historical context in order rightly to interpret the text. Knowing the context also helps to explain why I did not simply repeat what other Reformed theologians have said, but tried instead to translate it.

My aim in *Remythologizing Theology* and, indeed, as in everything I write, is to stand on the shoulders of Calvin and other Reformed giants, including the seventeenth-century Scholastics, not to desecrate their graves. The question concerns how best to honor their legacy and heritage. Rote repetition is one way, but it is not the only one, nor is it necessarily the most effective.

Dolezal is not blind to certain "virtues" in the book. He mentions two (the emphasis on the primacy of special revelation and the criticism of modern relational theologies). I only wish he had kept these in mind throughout, since he could have used these "clearer" passages to interpret those he found less clear. Instead, he reads me as consistently failing to remember in Parts Two and Three the important things I said in Part One. Enough with the authorial whining! It is time to confront the particular criticisms.

First, Dolezal laments my decision to give priority to the biblical accounts of God speaking to human beings. This is what he refers to as my "overly-restrictive thesis" (some might call it "focus"). It's true that I want the Bible's presentation of God to govern my doctrine of God. I am wary of "perfect being" theology, because it too often smuggles culturally conditioned values in through the back door. Consider, for example, the very idea of perfection. Aristotle thought that perfection implied immutability; Charles Hartshorne came to the opposite conclusion and parsed perfection in terms of God's universal relatedness. My concern is to make sure that Scripture (what I call *mythos*, the dramatic plot) rather than some other source governs our theological understanding. We know what God's love is, for example, because of what God says and *does* in the history of Israel, culminating with his definitive word and deed: the person and history of Jesus Christ (Jn. 15:13).

Remythologizing Theology is not a full-fledged doctrine of God. It is rather an attempt to work out the ontological implications of the Bible's depiction of God as a speaker: a communicative agent who says and does things with words. And, while it is true that I do focus on God's verbal communication (as does Scripture!), I also believe that God communicates his light, life, and love more broadly, not only in word but also in deed: "God communicates indirectly in the book of Nature and more directly through his living Word, Jesus Christ" (p. 475).

Furthermore, it is not clear from Dolezal's account that I see Scripture itself as God's preeminent verbal communication. The Bible is not only a record or transcript of revelation but is itself a form of divine discourse. The Bible is God's address to us in the church today. This is what I am trying to acknowledge and attend to: the living and active and powerful voice of God. I am not "bent on discovering" some "personalist brand of theology" (nor am I even sure what that means).

On the question of God's general revelation: while I do not deny that God makes himself known in the cosmos and human conscience, I do follow Calvin in insisting that we only interpret such revelation correctly when viewed through the spectacles of faith (i.e., the corrective lenses of Scripture). If "communication" includes the reception of a message, then we have to say that, while the heavens declare the glory of God, this in itself does not guarantee the reception of an undistorted message. Romans 1 should not be used as a charter for natural theology. The sinner both knows and does not know God, because the truth that is there to be known is suppressed in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). I am not "dialectical" about the knowledge of God available in general revelation. I am simply interpreting Romans 1 as describing the epistemic state of sinful self-deception and am concerned that even concepts of perfect being are susceptible to sinful self-distortion. In sum: *Remythologizing Theology* contends that revealed rather than natural theology is the only sure way to know the perfections of the triune God, the God of the Christian gospel. I think Calvin would agree.

Dolezal's second major area of concern is metaphysics. He defines metaphysics as the study of being-in-general, refers to it as a "lower science," and implies that theology proper (i.e., the doctrine of God) is something else, quite distinct. He seems to think that I am importing metaphysics into theology, or perhaps conflating theology with metaphysics, but in fact I am simply putting it in its place. Why does a doctrine of God have to concern itself with metaphysics in the first place? The tradition of Christian theism arose from what Etienne Gilson termed the "metaphysics of the Exodus." He was thinking of God's self-naming in Exodus 3:14: "I am that I am." The Septuagint translated this "I am the one who is," and Philo, together with most church fathers, interpreted this "is" in terms of Greek metaphysical reflection on being. Exegesis without some metaphysical presuppositions is impossible.

If metaphysics is the study of ultimate reality, then in speaking of the "metaphysics of the gospel," I am simply calling for our understanding of reality to be disciplined by God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. My concern is that many theologians have adopted metaphysical schemes from places other than the biblical text—call them "extra-textual" metaphysics. "Ontotheology" is one such extra-textual scheme, one that reads the biblical text through a Platonic or Neo-Platonic

lens (though, to be fair, the church fathers appropriate such metaphysics critically, revising them at key points in light of the revealed truth of Scripture). *Remythologizing Theology* seeks to develop what one might call "intra-textual" metaphysics (not ontotheology but "theo-ontology") by inquiring into the ontological presuppositions and implications of the biblical account of God's speaking and acting in our world, my particular focus in the book. The overall aim is to bring metaphysics—our understanding of reality or being in general—under the authority of Scripture. It is a matter of taking every metaphysical thought captive to Christ. Stated differently: I am suggesting that just as Christians adopt a special rather than a general hermeneutic for dealing with Scripture, so they ought to adopt a special rather than a general hermeneutic for dealing with the reality of God.

Dolezal is right to ask probing questions about whether this results in a leveling of the Creator-creature distinction, and I appreciate his acuteness in this regard. Much of my book is devoted consistently to maintaining the Creature-creature distinction against open theism and panentheist blurring. While Dolezal is absolutely right to worry about a univocism that applies the same categories to God and creatures in the same way, he has missed altogether my repeated emphasis on analogical predication, and on my repeated distinction of the economic and immanent Trinity (on analogy, see esp. pp. 195–96 and notes 58 and 59). With Dolezal, I explicitly affirm the ministerial role of metaphysics: "The *logos* of remythologizing theology has only a ministerial authority that takes its marching orders from the magisterially authoritative biblical *mythos* [story or plot]" (p. 477).

Dolezal criticizes me for employing a single set of metaphysics categories (e.g., communicative action) to both creatures and Creator. Of course, the tradition does this too—for example, with the category "cause"—though not without invoking analogy, as do I. In retrospect, however, I probably should have said explicitly, rather than implied, that there are some things that God does *not* communicate to his creatures, namely, his incommunicable attributes (e.g. infinity, aseity). Here I stand, corrected.

Dolezal's third and fourth "deficiencies" pertain not to theological method but to the material substance of Reformed dogmatics, namely, the doctrines of the effectual call and divine impassibility respectively. I fear he missteps on both counts.

Dolezal thinks that I have an "aversion to traditional causal explanations of God's activity in the world." The truth is that I have a stronger desire to ensure that such explanations are rooted primarily in Scripture rather than elsewhere. Dolezal says that I "dislike" Calvin's explanation that the Spirit "causes the preached Word to dwell in [sinners'] hearts" (p. 372). On the contrary, I am quoting Calvin approvingly. Indeed, the

whole purpose of my section on the effectual call (pp. 370–75) is to reclaim this important doctrine, and to do so deploying the communicative categories that I derived earlier in the book from an analysis of God's speaking. It is true that I distinguish communicative and instrumental causes. My reason for doing so, however, has nothing to do with my supposed inability to affirm God's sovereign and efficacious will (which I can and do affirm). Rather, it has everything to do with adhering to the Thomist (i.e., theistic) rule that God deals with creatures in his providence according to their natures.

Dolezal somehow concludes that I think human creatures have veto power over God's call. This is most unfortunate. Though I do speak of "soteric dialogues," I make it clear that the conversational relationship between God and human creatures is asymmetrical: God can efficaciously call us; we cannot efficaciously summon God. God's word has a communicative power that ours lacks (cf. Isa. 55:11). My book attempts conceptually to elaborate the effectual call as *the effect of a properly communicative cause* processing from God's word and Spirit—a "cause" that, far from violating the integrity of human nature, awakens and quickens it. To be a human person is to be one through whom God's word "sounds through" (*per + sonare*). God's communicative action is unlike creaturely communicative action, however, for God's call is effectual. By contrast, humans cannot control the effects of their communicative acts.

Remythologizing Theology describes and defends the doctrine of the effectual call from its modern detractors who paint it in impersonal causal terms. Is the result an "ontological synergism," according to which the efficacy of God's call depends upon the creature's response? Hardly. My position actually amounts to a divine *dialogical determinism*: God exercises his sovereign will through efficacious communication. (In the book I discuss this under the heading of authorial consummation, suggesting that God "authors" or determines the fate of his human creatures/characters, but does so communicatively, that is, by means of word and Spirit). I may have inadvertently confused Dolezal on this point by contrasting God's "instrumental" and "communicative" moving of human wills. On my view, the effectual call is a matter not of God "overriding" but rather of God *enabling* human freedom. Dolezal wants to say that God must act first to make the sinner willing and able to respond to the call of God. So do I. However, I locate this grace in the call itself. The effectual call is powerful enough literally to wake the dead. It is not that God first wakes the dead and then calls, but rather that God wakes us up by saying "Awake!" (cf. Jesus' "waking" dead Lazarus with a shout [Jn. 11:43], itself a kind of effectual call). God regenerates, just as he originally created all things from nothing, by saying things like "Let there be light." Dolezal may not agree in locating the regenerating power in the call

itself, but at the very least I hope he sees that I am far from promoting some kind of ontological synergism.

This may be the appropriate place to address my take on *semper reformanda*, the idea that the Reformed tradition is reformed and "always reforming." I do not use this phrase as a license to innovate. I view it rather as an acknowledgment of the church's need constantly to refer its doctrine and practice back to its source and norm: Scripture. I do not view *semper reformanda* as a mandate to revise the material content of the Reformed tradition. Yes, we must be willing to revise if it can be shown that a particular doctrine is unbiblical, but this is not the goal of *Remythologizing Theology*. On the contrary, its purpose is to translate: to set forth Reformed doctrine in a contemporary conceptual idiom that preserves the substance of the tradition (its fundamental theological judgments) with some new conceptual tools, tools that hopefully go some way towards responding to objections to Reformed formulations like the effectual call. I have no interest in being "progressive," though I do want to be "radical," in the sense of returning to the root of Reformed faith. This is what ultimately lies behind my attention to the biblical *mythos*, and the triune economy, rather than to autonomous metaphysical schemes that set forth general accounts of being. At points it seems that Dolezal cares more about the extent (and exactitude) of my conformity to earlier doctrinal formulations than he does about my fidelity to Scripture and its *scopus*: Jesus Christ. That, at least, is the impression he gives me in his comments, in which Scripture is conspicuous by its absence (the same cannot be said for tradition!).

On to the doctrine of divine impassibility. *Remythologizing Theology* is a full-scale attempt to define and defend the doctrine of divine impassibility against its modern detractors. Indeed, the doctrine's besieged status in contemporary theology was my primary motivator in writing the book. It is most disheartening, therefore, to discover that Dolezal fails to understand that much of what I say in the book I say to challenge what I dub the "new orthodoxy" (i.e., divine passibilism).

Dolezal attributes to me the strange belief that God suffers *as God* by virtue of God's own choice. He does not mention that I spend much of Part One criticizing precisely this position, which I name "voluntary kenotic relational" theology, also known as open theism (p. 441). Does God suffer as God? Before answering, it is important (1) to define "suffering" and (2) specify whether by "as God" we mean "according to his person" or "according to his nature." Unfortunately, Dolezal gives no indication that when I speak of God suffering as God, I am referring to the *person* of the second member of the Trinity (see the discussion of the Son's suffering on pp. 420–33, the section from which Dolezal draws the offensive quote). In defending divine impassibility, I also stand with the church fathers and affirm that, in Christ, "the impassible suffers." If

this is what Dolezal finds objectionable, or self-contradictory, then we have a host of new problems to discuss elsewhere.

I also spend a fair amount of time discussing what suffering means. Most Reformed theologians agree that God does not suffer in the sense of being affected by the world in his nature, will, or knowledge. So do I. The more contentious question is whether or not God has emotions and, if so, whether this means that there is an aspect of the divine life that can be affected by what happens in the world. Dolezal does not distinguish between these various senses of divine passibility, nor does he mention that Reformed theologians like B. B. Warfield, J. I. Packer, Wayne Grudem, and John Frame, who all want to say, on the basis of Scripture, that God is emotionally affected by what happens in the world—call it emotional passibility. I am actually more reticent (I won't say "too conservative"!) to affirm this, at least until we are clearer about what it means for God to have emotions.

Accordingly, I spend several pages in the book setting forth a constructive account of divine emotions in terms of active affections rather than passive passions. I further suggest that divine emotions are less reactions-to than evaluations-of. To be precise, God's emotions are concern-based evaluations of situations or states of affairs in the world. I understand divine compassion as a matter of God's covenantal concern-based construals of situations. It follows that God is not affected by anything that happens in the world. Rather, God responds to diverse circumstances by evaluating them in light of everything that he always already is, and this includes his covenantal purposes (i.e., foreknowledge). Contra Dolezal's suggestion that I apply the doctrine of kenosis to the whole Godhead, I distinguish and affirm God's "kyriotic," lordly compassion from the kenotic versions on the contemporary marketplace (see pp. 444–48).

Finally, Dolezal speculatively attributes to me the odd view that God is sovereign over his own being. Well, yes, in a sense this is so, if "sovereign over his own being" stands in contrast to "subject in his being to something else." That is the only sense of the phrase that I find acceptable. The triune Creator is always, everywhere, and at all times fully himself. God's life is marked by perfect plenitude: God does not need the world either to be himself or to sustain his existence. He is the Author of his own being only in the sense that, to use Jesus' words, "the Father has life in himself" (Jn. 5:26). In my book, authorship is the model for the God-world relationship, not for the relationship between God and his own nature. It is clear that the author of a text exists on a wholly different ontological plane than the characters in the world of the text. Of course, divine authorship is greater than human authorship, for in Jesus Christ, God enters into the very story of which he is the also the author.

As to my alleged "Barthianism," this is overstated. I find

in Barth's theology several helpful themes, as I do in many theologians. I am particularly grateful for Barth's criticism of Protestant liberal theology, and for his call to begin theology from the Word of God. Is this enough to make me a card-carrying Barthian? I doubt it. Indeed, it is not altogether clear to me what it means to be a Barthian, other than believing what Barth believed about God. I do not accept all that Barth says, however. Indeed, my most extensive treatment of Barth in *Remythologizing Theology* (pp. 199–205) is largely critical, and concludes by saying that Barth unnecessarily reduces God's being in communicative act with his revelation in Jesus Christ, whereas the Bible depicts God as acting communicatively at other points in the biblical narrative (and in Scripture throughout) as well.

To conclude: it should be obvious from the above comments that I think Dolezal has misunderstood me, both my intent (what I wanted to say) and my meaning (what I actually said), sometimes in seriously flawed ways. The Vanhoozer that he has created is so confused that he not only calls "good" "evil," but also says that it is simultaneously good (i.e., theistic) and evil (i.e., panentheistic)! Obviously, I do not have the communicative capacities that God has, for I cannot prevent being misread; apparently, my prose is far from effectual. I am not sure whether my finitude explains everything, however; I suspect that, for some reason, Dolezal is not letting the clearer parts of my argument—for example, things that I clearly affirm, like the Creator-creature distinction—govern his reading of those parts that are less clear. Consequently, he not only misconstrues the text, but also its author.

Still, I am grateful for Dolezal's review. For communication is not a one-way street, and even though the reader's response may not constitute meaning, it is a condition of successful communication (i.e., understanding). "Communication" means making common, sharing one's thoughts and feelings, in this case via language. I do not recognize my thoughts in Dolezal's account of them. I thus conclude that, at least in this case, communication has broken down. I suspect that I am at least partially to blame. Dolezal's review helpfully identifies those points where I need to work harder in order to communicate to readers of a certain Reformed persuasion. I shall try to do better next time (always reforming!). I take solace, however, in the fact that most readers and reviewers to date have rightly understood me. How do I know this? Because they typically criticize me for being too Reformed!

Surrejoinder to Kevin Vanhoozer. By James E. Dolezal.

I am grateful to Professor Vanhoozer for his response to my criticisms. As I indicated in my review, there are many features of his volume that are agreeable to Reformed orthodoxy. It was not my intent to undermine the genuineness of author's Reformed convictions or intentions, but simply to point out

that certain of his proposals do not appear consonant with these convictions. Vanhoozer disagrees. He points to the many places in his volume where he clearly opposes the very errors in which I suggest he is involved. Again, though, the question is not whether he affirms and applies sound scriptural and Reformed principles – he does – but whether he does so consistently. I do not see Vanhoozer as “consistently failing” but as failing to be consistent. Anyway, I shall satisfy myself to offer a few responses to his rejoinder.

Method

My misgivings about the author’s overly-restrictive thesis are not with his prioritizing “the Bible’s presentation of God” or with his regard of Scripture as the principium for our theologizing. Rather, my concern is with the exclusivity and selectiveness of his emphasis upon God as *verbal* communicator. By insisting that we “could know nothing of God or his purposes” apart from his verbal communication (primarily located in Scripture) Vanhoozer seem to undermine the natural knowledge of God which God himself conveys (non-verbally) to every human through the things that are made. As for the problem of selectiveness, the author’s thesis picks out the speech-acts of God among all the data of Scripture and grants them hegemony in delineating an ontological account of God’s being and essence. My difficulty with this is that divine dialogical speech-acts and “theodrama” are among the more anthropomorphic and anthropopathic biblical data. Indeed, at times the Bible seems to disambiguate speech-acts and God’s covenantal dealings by referring specifically to what God is in himself, prior to and apart from his interactions with creatures (e.g., Exod. 3:14; Mal. 3:6; James. 1:13, 17). In these places divine ontology explains God’s covenantal speech and actions rather than the other way around. Vanhoozer’s thesis leaves little room for this sort of inter-textual movement in which biblical statements about God’s being explain the accounts of his covenantal speech and action. The deeper difficulty, of course, may be the author’s tendency to think of God’s very being itself as a supreme instance of communicative theodrama, located in the interactions among the three persons of the Godhead (RT, 244–259).

Metaphysics

So long as Vanhoozer continues to insist that metaphysics is “the study of ultimate reality” he will not be able to get clear of ontological univocism between God and creatures. My review proposes a more modest conception of metaphysics as a lower science that studies being-in-general, which I explain as “being as it is common among creatures.” It should be obvious from this understanding why it is that I think the doctrine of God is quite distinct from metaphysics, though not entirely unrelated (since God’s act of existence is the ultimate sufficient

explanation for being-in-general). Vanhoozer’s description of metaphysics presupposes that there is a realm of “ultimate reality” in which God and creatures are found together and are explained according to a single set of metaphysical categories. It is true that he opposes the notion that “God is part of a single system of being” with creatures (RT, 222). Yet he appears to undermine the force of this when he states that his purpose is to “set forth a full-scale theodramatic metaphysics that sets forth categories for *all that is*” (RT, 183; emphasis his), including, evidently, “the reality of God.” “A ‘theodramatic’ metaphysics,” he informs us, “provides a systematic account of the categories needed to describe what God has said and done to renew all things in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. These categories enable us to give a ‘thick description’ of the whole of reality” (RT, 222). It is a mystery to me how this metaphysical “whole of reality” could be something other than a “single system of being.”

The author is conscientious that he will still need to invoke analogy in order to set God apart from creation within this orbit of ultimate reality; but this analogy can, within his proposed “theodramatic metaphysics,” only be applied at the level of essences, not of existence. In this way Vanhoozer’s analogy between God and creatures is similar to the horizontal analogy that Aquinas employs in his natural philosophy, which is calculated to highlight *essential* differences, but does not achieve an absolute *existential* distinction (nor is intended to do so). For this absolute existential distinction Aquinas proposes yet another sort of analogy that functions vertically and in which he insists that God is existentially beyond all categorical being (see John Wippel, “Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, 86–93). By including God as a proper subject of metaphysical inquiry it is not at all clear that Vanhoozer can achieve this requisite *existential* aspect of Creator-creature distinction; not even by colonizing metaphysics with theological language and concepts. That is why I maintain his metaphysical proposal allows univocism in the back door; existential univocism, not essential univocism. Then again, perhaps these are the very sorts of older categories he intends to banish from his newer construal of metaphysics.

Divine Causation, Effectual Calling, and Human Passivity

My dissatisfaction with the author’s explanation of the effectual call is not with his emphasis upon the call as “the effect of a properly communicative cause.” The difficulty, rather, is with the strident anti-instrumentality of his account and its tendency to undermine the soul’s passivity in regeneration. Why could we not formally distinguish between divine communicative causation and divine instrumental causation, while affirming their real identity or concomitance in God’s salvific action? Vanhoozer cannot accept such an account inasmuch as instrumental causality seems to work at a subconscious

level and is therefore, in his view, entirely incongruous with the *personal* and *communicative* quality of God's effectual call. To operate upon the soul subconsciously is apparently an "impersonal" act that violates human nature. In this connection Vanhoozer is critical of Anthony Hoekema for saying that God's regenerative activity changes the heart at a *subconscious* level (RT, 373). But why must all of God's personal acts of salvific causation be at the level of human consciousness? The author forces a false choice between personal causation on the communicative and conscious level and impersonal coercive causation at the subconscious level. But it is not clear why God's causal activity at man's subconscious level would be necessarily impersonal or a violation of human integrity.

Vanhoozer speaks of God's enabling grace that "cooperates with" the human nature (RT, 368). This is fine. But his account of how the human soul – fallen, corrupted by sin, and radically unable to respond to God – is adequately outfitted to respond favorably to the call at the level of consciousness leaves little to no room for the soul's passivity. I submit that this outfitting occurs by God's power (through his Spirit) working upon the corrupt nature at the subconscious level while *at the same moment and in the same divine act* performing its persuasive and informative function through his word and Spirit in the subject's mind and affections. The salvific transformation is then both unconscious and conscious in the same man at the same moment. To remove the unconscious element from this account seems to undercut the genuine passivity of the soul in regeneration (see L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 491). Thus, while Vanhoozer can rightly affirm the sole priority of God in calling, his insistence upon the *exclusivity* of the conscious element in salvation cannot account for why it is that particular souls, dead in sin, are inclined to answer that call favorably. The lack of human passivity in the author's account suggests a measure of synergism between God and the creature, even if the relationship is still regarded as asymmetrical.

Impassibility

Upon reading Vanhoozer's response to my criticism of his views on impassibility, I am persuaded that he is much sounder on the kenosis doctrine than my remarks indicated. He does indeed lay great stress on the fact that any notion of divine suffering applies strictly to the *person* of the Son and not to the divine nature as such. His *ex professo* treatments of the kenosis and impassibility would indicate that my criticisms against his view are misplaced. Still, and at the risk of appearing insincere in my concession, I want to suggest that there are certain features of Vanhoozer's description of God that seem to present intractable difficulties for his stance on divine impassibility, and more broadly, divine immutability. Most outstanding in this regard are his emphases upon God as "self-moved" and "self-authored."

Consider the author's following explanation of how it is that God commands his own compassion: "He cannot be moved from outside by an extraneous power. But this does not mean that He is not capable of moving Himself. No, God is moved ... and touched by Himself" (RT, 446; citing Karl Barth). Furthermore, compassion is not just something God possesses, it is what he is: "Everything that God is and does is determined and characterized by the fact that ... He Himself, is this original free powerful compassion" (RT, 446, citing Barth). Evidently, Vanhoozer, like Barth, conceives of God as ontologically self-moved inasmuch as God moves himself to compassion and is also ontologically identical with this compassion. This explanation, expressly intended as an alternative to Anselm's "unmoved" God, raises a host of challenges. To the extent that God can be touched and made to experience compassion by virtue of his own intrinsic activity, this account seems to contradict the classical doctrine of God's simplicity. A God *moved* to compassion, even by himself, cannot be immutable or pure act in any strong sense. Some aspect of his nature (e.g., a capacity for affections) is conceived as being in passive potency toward the actualizing power of some other intrinsic divine feature (e.g., God's will). The divine activity of commanding compassion, then, seems to reduce some divine potency to actuality. In other words, God makes himself "to be" in some sense. The traditional Reformed outlook is quite different. The mystery of God's free compassion is that it is purely actual and is never caused or brought about through some sort of internal divine process in which God operates upon himself. God is not like the physician who, by virtue of operating upon himself, is both agent and patient. But in following Barth, Vanhoozer seems to suggest just such a conception. This is why I note that he seems to think of God as sovereign over himself.

As for divine self-authorship, Vanhoozer's statements appear inconsistent. His response to my review seems to back away from certain claims in his book. He asserts that in his volume authorship is not a model for the relationship between God and his own nature, but simply between God and the world. Yet he takes the divine name in Exodus 3:14, "I AM," to mean "I am my own author" or "I author, therefore I am" (RT, 485). It is hard to see how this is not in conflict with the declarations, "God alone is the unauthored Author" (RT, 486), and, "God is the author of everything other than Himself" (RT, 469; citing Katherin Rogers). Of course, it may be that talk of divine self-authorship is simply a case of poor wording.

Conclusion

I take Vanhoozer's repudiation of my particular criticisms of his volume to signal the soundness of his theological instincts and intentions. For this I am glad. My aim in the second half of my review was not utterly to dismiss the stronger points of

his work, but simply to highlight perceived inconsistencies in it. These deficiencies seem to me to weaken the effectiveness of the volume for meeting the challenges of the various relational theologies. It is undoubtedly a real possibility, though, that I have misunderstood him, as he says. ■

Review: Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Paperback, xvi+302 pages. ISBN 9780199590384. \$35. Reviewed by Patrick Arnold, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Philosophy Graduate Student

Paul Helm's brilliant 1988 book *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time* is now in its second edition. Featuring four new chapters that extend Helm's defense of the classic Christian doctrine of God's eternity into new territory and more recent philosophical debates, the second edition of *Eternal God* only strengthens its place as a classic and go-to work for a consistently Reformed presentation of God's relation to time.

Eternal God is a work of analytic philosophical theology, meaning there is little exegetical or biblical theology covered in the book. Helm, of course, is building on a rich bedrock of theology in the Augustinian and Reformed traditions and defending it within the context of recent work in the philosophy of religion. On nearly every page Helm interacts with both classic and recent literature on God's relation to time in the philosophy of religion, covering the seminal work of philosophers like Richard Swinburne, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Alvin Plantinga, while also relying heavily on Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas, Calvin, and Edwards.

The bulk of the book is devoted to critiquing specific arguments of specific philosophers. In addition, some of the chapters were originally stand-alone papers published in journals or other collections. These features are to be expected in a work of serious academic philosophical theology, but some readers may find it difficult always to keep in view how the particular argument or claim in question relates to the broader issue of God's relation to time and what that means for his relationship to the created, temporal world humans inhabit. No comprehensive work of systematic or philosophical theology that grapples with God's relation to time can afford to ignore Helm's case in *Eternal God*, but for readers new to the topic of God and time, it may be helpful first to review

discussion of God's eternity in Reformed systematic theology, such as Herman Bavinck's overview in the second volume of his *Reformed Dogmatics*, or John Frame's discussion in his *Doctrine of God*, before plunging into the intricacies of the contemporary debate as covered in *Eternal God*.¹

Chapter one introduces the issue of God's relation to time and is primarily concerned with defending the legitimacy of the debate itself within philosophical theology. Helm argues that, much like the status of many scientific theories with respect to the scriptural data, God's relation to time is undetermined by Scripture, meaning that the exact position is left open by the biblical writers. On this point most, though not all, contemporary philosophers of religion agree. Some philosophers, such as one of the ablest proponents of the temporalist theory, Nicholas Wolterstorff, hold that the eternalist view has virtually no support in Scripture despite its great precedence in the history of theology. Philosophical reflection on God's relation to time, then, has a useful supporting role to play in the debate alongside the contributions of exegesis and systematic, biblical, and historical theology.

The questions Helm sets out to discuss in the book are these: What account of God and time best coheres with the biblical narrative, with a God who creates, transcends, redeems, reveals, sustains, and interacts with his creation? Further, what view of time best fits with more firmly established doctrines in Scripture concerning God's nature, and what accounts of time are decisively ruled out by those doctrines? We might frame these questions in terms of the traditional poles of transcendence and immanence: How can God transcend time as Lord over it, yet also be immanent within time and active in human history? As Bavinck aptly puts it, "In God's eternity there exists not a moment of time; in his immensity there is not a speck of space; in his being there is no sin of becoming. Conversely, it is God who posits the creature, eternity which posits time, immensity which posits space, being which posits becoming, immutability which posits change."² No doubt "[i]t is a mark of God's greatness that he can condescend to the level of his creatures and that . . . while absolutely maintaining his immutability, he can enter into an infinite number of relations to his creatures."³

Helm's response is little different at root than the one running through the history of Christian theology, from Augustine and Anselm to Aquinas, Calvin, and the post-Reformation scholastics. The biblical data, Helm's basic argument goes, requires a strong conception of God's immutability and his distinctness from creation, and immutability and the Creator-creator distinction require God's timelessness. The eternal God, though, is the God who accommodates in his revelation and condescends in his participation in human history. This core insight is expanded, defended, and supplemented with further arguments over the next thirteen chapters.

1. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, Vol. 2, translated by John Vriend, edited by John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), chapter 4. And John Frame, *Doctrinal God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), particularly chapter 24.

2. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, v.2, 158.

3. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, v.2, 159.

If immutability, a strong Creator-creature distinction, as well as the fullness and perfection of divine, *a se* existence are some of the main doctrinal underpinnings motivating an eternalist theory, what then are the guiding principles behind temporalist theories of God's relation to time? A temporal God not only acts in time, but exists in his very being in time. Contemporary defenders of God's temporality like Wolterstorff often take God's history and his life as the doctrines to be preserved.⁴ God lives in the past and the present, and will be present in the future—essential features that an atemporal God cannot realize. As Helm puts it, “One reason for supposing that God is in time is that it enables us to think of him as having a rich, successive mental life, a life of intentions and purposes, and for him to witness the fulfillment and frustration of his plans.”⁵

For process theology, similar to pantheistic theologies, it is more than just the history of God's existence that motivates a temporal view of the divine nature, but the inevitably mutable essence of being, along with a recasting of divine fullness as reactive and risk-taking—a reversal of the Boethian and Anselmian argument that the fullness of divine existence is satisfied by immutable self-sufficiency of which there cannot, and need not, be any alteration. Picturing God as inherently temporal in processes theology is also motivated by a prior rejection of the Creator-creature distinction in exchange for an anthropocentric view of God as subject to the same changes humans experience with the passing of time, from maturing with age to remembering and missing past experiences with no possibility of making the past once again present.⁶ A perhaps even stronger motivation for rejecting the eternalist view is to allow for libertarian free will, for on eternalism all future events, including human choices, are eternally “present” to and known by God. On the temporalist picture, God may indeed have (literal) *foreknowledge*, but it is open for the temporalist nonetheless to deny that included in that foreknowledge are as of yet unmade, free human decisions. God, like the rest of us, must wait for the future to see what choices free agents will make.

The temporalist tries to find support in the many scriptural passages that speak of God's interaction in time and responsive presence in human history, and they argue that these passages are not to be interpreted as anthropomorphic or accommodated language, but as literally describing a God whose very being is temporal, who existed in time even before the creation of the world. Much more difficult for the temporalist to explain, however, are the passages that speak of God as transcending time; passages that, though couched in temporal, tensed language, also imply that God cannot be measured or fully described by the language of time. God the great I AM “inhabits eternity” (Isa. 57:15), existed before the creation of the world (Gen. 1:1, John 1:1), and transcends

the human experience of the passage of time since “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8). Perhaps unfortunately, Helm does not go into much depth in discussion of the temporalist position, and says even less about its often cited biblical proofs. Readers interested in Helm's response to temporalist theories would benefit from reviewing his contribution to the book *God and Time: Four Views*, of which he is a contributor on behalf of the eternalist theory.⁷

What, though, does it mean to say God is eternal in the first place? This question occupies Helm in chapter two. It can primarily be explained by negation: an eternal God does not exist in time, and is in no way limited by temporality. God does not have a past, and so there are no facts God can only know by remembering them. Neither does God have a future. Yet God, unlike other timeless entities like numbers or propositions, is a person who acts, wills, and speaks. He is a person who knows temporal facts, participates within human history, and even in the incarnation takes on a temporal human nature. The combination of a God who is fully personal yet also fully outside time has led some defenders of a time-bound God to conclude that the eternalist view is incoherent, and at least since Hume it has fed into a number of atheological arguments against the possibility of the existence of such a God.⁸

Further, if God is present throughout all human history, does this not make all of history simultaneous, making, for example, Christ's death simultaneous with his return? Some Reformed theologians have shared this worry. James Oliver Buswell asks, on the eternalist theory, “If there is no past or future for God, are we not still in our sins?”⁹ For Christ's death is not “past” for God; it is as eternally and atemporally “present” as every other event, the objection goes. Of course, God does at once see the whole of human history from his eternal point of view, but he also knows temporally indexed facts—facts about the dates of events, about which events are earlier than or later than others, as well as facts about what is present, or “now,” from the human temporal point of view.

Chapter three is devoted to solving this riddle of God's knowledge of temporal indexicals. Indexicals, such as “now,” “here,” “today,” and “I,” are expressions whose content is context

4. Gregory E. Ganssle ed. *God and Time: Four Views* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2001), 211.

5. Helm, *Eternal God*, 90.

6. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, v.2, 155.

7. Ganssle, *God and Time*, *op cit*.

8. Helm, *Eternal God*, 57. For contemporary versions of the atheological arguments, see Theodore Drange, “Incompatible Properties Arguments: A Survey,” in *The Impossibility of God*, ed. Michael Martin (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003).

9. Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervon. 1962), 42–47.

dependent. The content of “now” depends on when it was uttered, for example. “The kettle is boiling” uttered on 19 January carries content about the present that “The kettle boils on 19 January” lacks, and one might know the latter without knowing the former. Knowing that “The kettle is *now* boiling” is true requires knowing when it was uttered, and thus, the temporalist argument goes, God must be temporal to know indexical facts.

The argument is a suspicious one, not the least because it appears to move from facts about language to facts about metaphysics and epistemology that bind even God. The argument requires that statements containing temporal indexicals cannot be reduced to tenseless statements, and that in knowing facts with indexicals one knows propositions and not, say, a type of non-propositional knowing *how*, as opposed to a propositional knowing *that*. As Helm summarizes elsewhere: “All that God needs to know in order to know that the kettle is boiling now is that the kettle is boiling on some date and for him to know that the date is now for me.”¹⁰ Helm goes on the offensive, demonstrating that the temporalist argument would prove too much if correct, for a parallel problem can be raised for space and God’s knowledge of propositions using the corresponding indexical “here.” Unless the temporalist is willing to concede that God is in space as well as time, there must be a way for God to know indexicals without being temporal.¹¹

Chapters four and five continue to analyze the relationship between God’s eternity and his other attributes, including his being a person, immutable, and omniscient. Helm’s survey suggests that in many cases it is harder to construe charitable versions of the temporalist or atheological arguments that do not beg the question than it is to provide a compelling reply to them. It is in these chapters that Helm begins to develop a general model of divine action, which is a topic he returns to in some of the chapters new to the second edition, particularly concerning the act of creation. The basic eternalist model for divine action is that God timelessly but contingently decrees and produces all of creation, including its temporal sequence. “God’s action existed from all eternity,” writes Aquinas, “whereas its effect was not present from eternity, but existed at that time when, from all eternity, He ordained it.”¹²

10. Ganssle, *God and Time*, 216.

11. Later, Helm considers extensions of this *reductio* to knowledge of propositions involving other types of indexicals, such as “I” and “me.” See 75ff.

12. *Summa contra Gentiles*, 2.35.3

13. Helm, *Eternal God*, 86.

14. Oliphint *Reasons [for Faith]: Philosophy in the Service of Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), chapter 12, and pp. 229–230.

15. Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 395.

16. See William L. Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

17. Helm, *Eternal God*, 142.

The only sense in which God can “change” is in terms of “merely Cambridge” changes, which are purely relational changes that do not affect the nature of a thing, and none of these “Cambridge” changes in God are spatial or temporal.¹³ But here, in Helm’s account of divine action and immutability, we find an intramural debate between contemporary Reformed philosophers, one we can only note in passing. In his recent work *Reasons for Faith*, Scott K. Oliphint argues that God’s essential properties—those properties that amount to his identity without which God would not be God—are fully atemporal. Yet God in his condescension, in creating and interacting with the world, takes on contingent, covenantal properties which *are* temporal, and this is the only way to explain biblically God’s acts such as creation and the incarnation.¹⁴ The difference can be clearly seen in the case of God’s relation to a repentant sinner: in the atonement and in the act of a sinner repeating, the change in Scripture is presented as a change in God from wrath to grace. But on Helm’s view there is no actual change in God, certainly not at the temporal moment when the sinner repents, for that would make God temporal. God’s actions are from eternity, to love those in Christ and to have wrath upon those outside of Christ. The change is not in God, but in the sinner who repents. It is a change “from our belief that we are under wrath to our belief that we are under grace.”¹⁵ What are the limits of what God can take upon himself that are not identical to his nature in his condescension? Clearly the starting point for addressing such questions must be the incarnation and the person of Christ, who takes on a temporal, spatial human nature while remaining exactly who he is as the Second Person of the Trinity. Much more needs to be said on both sides of this currently murky but significant issue of God’s immutability.

Helm discusses what may be the most prominent reason for rejecting God’s eternity in chapters five through ten. The objection is not a surprising one: If God is eternal, and if all human history, as well as all the outcomes of human choices, is eternally “present” to and known by God, then humans cannot have libertarian free will. Envisioning God as temporal is one way to safeguard indeterministic free will. Helm splits the chapters into the various branches this problem takes, from the relation of God’s timelessness to his foreknowledge and the future, to worries of fatalism and the possibility of human responsibility on the eternalist picture. Helm also devotes a chapter to the question of how God himself can be free—an issue that in recent years has garnered much attention in philosophy of religion.¹⁶

Helm consistently and persuasively argues that “[o]nly timeless eternity prevents the degeneracy of divine omniscience and divine immutability into the idea of a God who changes with the changing world and who is surprised by what he discovers.”¹⁷ In fact, God’s timeless creation seems directly

to entail determinism, though clearly not a mechanistic determinism but an all-encompassing, providential governance of history by its Creator. In decreeing the creation of the world, God decrees the content of creation, which includes not only beings and events but their causal relations to one another throughout history. "In short what God timelessly decrees is a complete causal matrix of events and actions."¹⁸ Along with this argument, Helm develops a compelling case for the compatibilist account of human choice, arguing for the compatibility of God's complete knowledge and determination of human history with free human choice and moral responsibility. Readers familiar with Helm's other works on this topic, such as his 1994 book *The Providence of God*, already know him as one of the best contemporary defenders of the Reformed doctrines of election, providence, and compatibilist free will, particularly within philosophy of religion, and these chapters in *Eternal God* are no exception.¹⁹

Humans might be free in a deterministic world created by a timeless God, but in what sense is a timeless God himself free? As the doctrine of immutability describes, God cannot and need not change in his essential attributes. Though the decree of creation and its implicit ruling out of other alternatives is eternal, it is nonetheless contingent insofar as there are many possible worlds God could have created had he so wanted. God's choices reflect his nature, and, as is the case with human free will, only by acting in according with his nature is God free. Freedom, then, has more to do with the rationality and reasons of an action than, say, the status of the act as determined or not. "But that God is sufficiently powerful that he could [have created the world differently] is not to say that he would. In fact, we know from the actual world that he would not, because he has not."²⁰ The sense in which God is free in, say, creation, requires a delicate, nuanced treatment, and Helm offers the beginnings of such an account in this chapter. To reinforce these distinctions he closes by comparing the free but timeless God of Christianity with the pantheistic and monistic God of Spinoza. On fundamental issues like the Creator-creature distinction and the personal nature of God the two theologies could not be further apart, though they superficially resemble one another in their determinism.

Helm turns next to consider the potential problem of referring to an eternal God. "God," claims philosopher Kai Nelson, "is supposed to be some kind of referring expression standing for an infinite, non-spatiotemporal, non-indicable individual, utterly transcendental to the cosmos. When we reflect on the meanings of these terms we recognize that it would be logically impossible to verify that such an alleged individual exists."²¹

Such arguments against the possibility of referring to God seem to presuppose a now discredited and probably self-refuting theory of meaning, a type of evidential theory of

meaning according to which a term is meaningful if and only if it is either a tautology or empirically verifiable. The arguments may be better rephrased as more epistemic, stemming purely from God's transcendence and not, as Helm takes it, from the nature of reference in expressions like proper names. For in light of the vast gap between Creator and creature, we can only refer to and know God in virtue of his first condescending to the level of his creatures. Helm unfortunately does not pursue this characteristically Reformed line of response, but instead offers a useful account of how the term "God" refers. The name "God," Helm argues, doesn't just refer but "expresses the individual nature of God," involving properties unique to God—as opposed to general essential properties that multiple individuals can possess. Hence properties like omniscience are not just God's necessarily, but his and his *alone* necessarily.²² "Here we see the point of saying that God is not a god in the sense in which Smith is a man. There cannot be a divine nature which, like a natural kind [e.g., human], is sharable by more than one individual."²³ The chapter amounts to a fascinating application of work in the philosophy of language, such as that of Saul Kripke and Alvin Plantinga, but lingering worries remain that it has not addressed some of the deeper theological issues in referring to God.

The final four chapters are new to the second edition. They continue the eternalist argument in conversation with more recent discussions of the nature of time in analytic metaphysics and philosophy of religion, covering topics like the relation of atemporal time to divine creation and the trinity. Helm also adds to his presentation of eternalism a new layer of terminology borrowed from analytic metaphysics. The seminal work of J.M.E. McTaggart in the early 20th century on the nature of time divides the two ways of conceiving time into what he called the A series and the B series, or time as tensed and time as tenseless. In the A series, instances of time have objective properties like being past, present, or future, and these properties are necessary to make sense of time in addition to the tenseless relations events have. Some A theorists also embrace forms of presentism, meaning they give an ontological priority to the present. According to presentism, only present things exist. In the B series, events have fixed relations to each other, relations like earlier than, later than, and simultaneous, but do not have the objective A series properties of being future or being present, say. On a theistic view of the B series, God creates the series and all its tenseless

18. Helm, *Eternal God*, 170.

19. Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1994).

20. Helm, *Eternal God*, 188.

21. Quoted in Helm, *Eternal God*, 196–197.

22. Helm, *Eternal God*, 209.

23. Helm, *Eternal God*, 209.

relations but does not exist within them. Sometimes versions of the B series are called block theories of time, for they place time as a dimension like space and give no ontological priority to the present time. Just like there is no location with the real property “here” abstracted from the location of some particular object or person, there is no point in time that has the property of an absolute “now” outside of the perspective of some object or person.

McTaggart used this framework in a number of radical arguments, primarily the claim that time is an illusion altogether insofar as the A series is necessary to characterize time but it is hopelessly contradictory. Many of his arguments are often disregarded, but the A and B series framework has since characterized much philosophical debate over the nature of time, and a good portion of philosophers have since agreed that contradictions lurk within the A series and its implications. In these last four chapters, Helm defends the eternalist theory as a form of B theory of time and against theorists like William Lane Craig who defend the A theory.

The first new chapter is devoted to analyzing Craig’s hybrid proposal, which pictures God as “timeless *sans* creation and in time *avec* creation.”²⁴ In other, perhaps even less helpful words, “before” (non-temporally before) creation God was timeless, but God since creation exists within time. God’s relation to time is thus not a necessary part of his nature, but contingent upon his will, though God nonetheless necessarily loses his timelessness with creation and so is not exactly sovereign over his relation to time all told. A number of philosophers have argued that this is simply incoherent: how can an atemporal God *become* anything? Perhaps a better way to see the proposal is to frame the relation to time

24. Helm, *Eternal God*, 218.

25. Helm, *Eternal God*, 226.

26. Conversely, one of Craig’s main reasons for rejecting the purely temporalist theory is that (as per his Kalam cosmological argument) Craig rejects the possibility of an actual infinite series of events, as would be required if God’s life is everlasting. The Kalam argument purports to show that the universe must have had a cause, because otherwise it would entail that there is an actually infinite series of past temporal events which is shown to be metaphysically impossible by thought experiments like Hilbert’s Hotel. Landon Hedrick has recently argued in a draft “Heartbreak at Hilbert’s Hotel” that Craig’s argument against an actually infinite series of events in fact fails if one accepts Craig’s own view of time: if one were a presentist about time, as Craig has ascribed, then one would deny that past events are real in any sense, and thus deny that a beginningless universe entails an actually infinite series. Hilbert’s Hotel, if successful, establishes that an actually infinite number of things cannot exist, which only serves to reinforce the presentist thesis, if one accepts a beginningless universe, that the past does not exist. So it may be the case that one of Craig’s main reasons for rejecting the temporalist theory is flawed (not to mention one of his favorite arguments for the existence of God), or that his presentist theory of time is mistaken in light of what he commits himself to in the Kalam argument.

not as a property, but as a mode of possessing properties. Helm contends that there is still no clear sense in which God could have real “phases” in his life, one temporal and the other eternal. Further, this change in God seems to impact all other attributes and capabilities he possesses. For instance, *sans* creation God’s knowledge would be tenseless, while *avec* creation it would be tensed.²⁵ Two of the main motivations of the theory, as opposed to a purely eternalist account, are, first, that Craig finds it nonsensical that God would acquire a new relation at the moment of creation—that of sustaining the temporal universe at each moment—but remain atemporal with respect to that temporal dimension. If God sustains all that exists at each moment it exists, then God possesses a temporal nature in virtue of that relationship. We have seen already how Helm responds to such objections in his discussion of God’s immutability and omniscience in relation to his eternity. Second, and presupposed by Craig’s formation of the first motivation, Craig claims that the eternalist theory requires a mistaken metaphysics of time, the B theory, while Helm argues this is not a liability of eternalism but a direct advantage consistent with the broader theory he has thus far developed in the book.²⁶

In the following chapter, “The Two Standpoints,” Helm, building on Augustine, offers a positive attempt at reconciling the daunting gap between the experience of time for humans and the timeless God who reigns as Lord over time. Obviously, time is fundamentally different for God compared to how it is for humans. It does not make sense to ask what is present, as opposed to past, for God, but it does make sense to say that there is a present time for you or me. So compelling is the reality of the present “now” that it seems to be like a spotlight moving across a time-line, from past to future, in which all the other parts save the immediate moment are blackened out, accessible by only memory or by prediction. From the human, creaturely standpoint, the past and future themselves seem non-existent or perhaps just not as real as the present. From the finite temporal standpoint, we seem to experience both the A and B series of time, but Helm argues that the Creator-creator distinction prevents us from inferring from our temporal experience to God’s experience and nature, not to mention inferring from our experience the metaphysical nature of time for the world we inhabit. God has his own standpoint as divine, eternal, omniscient and transcendent, and it is with this in mind, and not our own standpoint, that we must approach questions of his relation to time.

In the other two new chapters, “Eternal Creation” and “Time and Trinity,” Helm returns to other topics in the original edition, beginning with difficulties in the idea that God eternally decrees the world to come into existence. He defends eternal creation against arguments by Richard Swinburne which maintain that causation is necessarily temporal. Helm

contends that eternal, timeless causation, analogically understood, is not incoherent though it does require of the eternalist a level of ignorance about the nature of such causation—for, like many of the implications of God’s relation to time, “it is surely to be expected that in dealing with matters for which there exists no exact parallel in human experience an element of agnosticism will be forced upon us.”²⁷ He also notes that the temporalist likely fares worse in accounting for the creation of the world, for the theory fails to explain how God is not a prisoner of time. The final chapter heaps one final argument for eternalism onto the by now impressive pile: only if God is eternal can the classic Christian doctrine of the eternal begetting of the Son be retained, and Arianism be avoided.

There are small weaknesses in the book, some of which we have touched on: there isn’t always enough background explanation and with the additional four chapters in the second edition there is a degree of redundancy. There is no chapter on the topic of the incarnation and time, though Helm directs the reader to Brian Leftow’s recent paper “A Timeless God Incarnate” and notes he has little to add to what Leftow has covered.²⁸ At least a chapter devoted to surveying the biblical data would have added another helpful layer to the book, as would some discussion of what is or might be still open for debate within Reformed theology specifically.

God’s relation to time is no doubt one of the most difficult issues in the theological and philosophical *loci*. What makes Paul Helm unique as a Christian philosopher who is deeply involved in esoteric debates in the philosophy of religion and epistemology is not only his impressive knowledge of philosophy and his remarkable clarity when writing on issues like God and time, but his continued faithfulness to confessional Reformed theology. The past few decades, following the demise of logical positivism, have seen a renaissance of Christian philosophers within the academy. In spite of the great progress that has been made in many areas, Christians in philosophy overwhelmingly favor libertarian free will, open theism, a temporal and often mutable and impotent God, and other compromises at odds with classic Christian orthodoxy. In contemporary debates in the philosophy of religion, the positions of Reformed theology are often the antithesis to be avoided at all costs. Helm stands as one of the few defenders of the theology of the likes of Augustine, Calvin, Edwards, and Bavinck within academic philosophy, and his works like *Eternal God* will long remain monumental Reformed contributions to philosophy. ■

Review: Willem J. Van Asselt, et al., *Scholastic Discourse: Johannes Maccovius (1588–1644) on Theological and Philosophical Distinctions and Rules* (Apeldoorn, The Netherlands: Instituut voor Reformatieonderzoek, 2009). 378 pp.

Paperback. ISBN 9789079771059. € 34.95. Reviewed by Rev. Wes White, pastor of New Covenant Presbyterian Church in Spearfish, South Dakota.

This new book presents to us one of the greatest Polish Reformed theologians. I know what some readers might be thinking: for someone to be one of the greatest Polish Reformed theologians is not saying much since there are so few. That is in part true, however, in the 16th and 17th centuries, there was a Reformed Church in Poland. From this Church came several theologians who had a wide influence on theological thought. In the 16th century, the Polish noble, Johannes à Lasko came to Emden, Germany and laid the foundations for a Reformed ecclesiology (see Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002], 68–76). In the 17th century, the most famous Polish theologian was another Polish noble, Johannes Maccovius (1588–1644), professor of theology at Franeker in the Netherlands.

Johannes Maccovius was one of the more colorful theologians of the age. He was Rembrandt’s brother-in-law. Some have speculated that Rembrandt was thinking of Maccovius when he painted the blind eye of Julius Civilis in his Stockholm painting. Rembrandt may also have been thinking of Maccovius when he painted a “portrait of a Pole and his horse.” Maccovius was accused of loose living (even though not convicted) which led to conflict with the strict Puritan William Ames (his fellow professor at Franeker). Among other things, he was accused of “habitual drunkenness and leading a *belluina vitam*, defaming his colleagues, taking part in brawls, promoting clanship among the students and visiting brothels” (12–13).

In addition, scholars have often viewed Maccovius as being “hyper-scholastic,” and thus, he has become the “whipping boy” of Arminian and anti-scholastic literature. This was due in part to the conflict between Maccovius and his older colleague Sibbrandus Lubbertus (1555–1625). The conflict was both personal and theological. When Maccovius became professor in 1614, Maccovius quickly became more popular than Lubbertus. Maccovius pressed the point by scheduling his lectures at the same time as the lectures of Lubbertus. Eventually, this led to Maccovius being accused of fifty errors before the classis of Franeker in 1617. The classis of Franeker actually found Maccovius guilty of heresy, but Maccovius was exonerated by the Synod of Dort with an encouragement to be careful in his speech on certain points. This controversy has led to the accusation that he was a hyper-scholastic.

27. Helm, *Eternal God*, 246.

28. In *The Incarnation*, ed. Stephen T. David, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

On the other hand, there have been more positive evaluations. Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669), the famous covenant theologian and colleague of Maccovius at Franeker, delivered Maccovius' funeral oration and gave a "congenial overview of Maccovius' life and works" (3). Pierre Bayle in his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697) said that Maccovius was a "fearsome opponent of Jesuit and Socinian doctrines concerning God and grace" (*ibid.*). Van Asselt summarizes Bayle's entry this way: "he compared Maccovius with a guard dog that protects the house of its master by barking against all intruders ..." (*ibid.*). John Owen referred to him as "the veteran leader, so well trained to the scholastic field" and "judicious" (2). In spite of his failings, Reformed theologians widely praised the theological work of Maccovius.

Another sign of their appreciation was the wide use of his book, *On Theological Distinctions and Rules*. This book was probably derived from Maccovius' lectures. Van Asselt describes the book this way: "It was a classroom book for the brand new students in theology (*novicii*) who were encountering many of these theological and philosophical distinctions for the very first time" (35). It is an introduction to the theological categories that the students would use throughout their theological education. It also provides an introduction to Maccovius' own thought. This book was printed several times in various places in Europe, and it was translated into Dutch.

Now *On Theological Distinctions and Rules* is available to modern students in a new Latin edition with an English translation and introduction under the title *Scholastic Discourse* (cited above) by Willem van Asselt, Michael D. Bell, Gert van den Brink, and Rein Ferwerda. In this new book, these men provide an introduction to Maccovius' life, introduce us to the context of the work, and provide a helpful English translation. The unique feature of this book is that it contains the Latin on one page and the English translation on the other. Thus, it is helpful not only as an introduction to Reformed theology but also to scholastic Latin.

Allow me to provide a few examples of this book's usefulness. The first chapter contains distinctions on Holy Scripture. There are forty-five rules. The forty-fifth rule is this: "Proofs taken from parables prove nothing save only something regarding the scope of the parable" (83). Maccovius explained that the Socinians had used the details of parables to prove their theology. Maccovius argued that this was an incorrect methodology. For example, he responded to their use of the parable of the unforgiving servant to prove that forgiveness could take place without satisfaction this way:

Hence it can be seen how absurd it is to argue as the Socinians do saying that God can forgive our sins without receiving any satisfaction, because the lord [in the parable] dismissed the debts of his slave without receiving any satisfaction. This

proof is not derived from the scope of the parable, for its scope is that God forgives the sins of those who forgive others. The scope is not that the lord forgives just as the lord of the parable did. (*Ibid.*)

This is an important rule, but one that has often been neglected.

Second, in regard to the preaching of the Gospel, he tells us that we should distinguish between the goal of the Gospel and the goal of its author: "The goal of the Gospel by itself is nothing else but illumination. In respect of its author, however, it is also possible that it results rather in the blinding of some people (99)." He gives as an example John 12:40 which explains that God commanded Isaiah to preach in order to increase blindness. There is a similar rule in regard to the law. According to Maccovius, there are commandments of obedience and commandments that convince. This explains the call of the Gospel to the reprobate. They are called to repent, but God does not intend to save them. He intends to convince them of their wickedness. The same can be said concerning the commands given to Pharaoh to let the people of Israel depart and to Abraham to sacrifice his son (87).

Third, Maccovius uses distinctions to explain seeming conflicts in Scripture. One example is the distinction in God's love. John describes God's love for sinners as the foundation for the accomplishment of redemption (Jn. 3:16). At the same time, Paul teaches that we are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). Maccovius' thirteenth rule in the chapter on predestination is this: "Love is twofold: either it is love of benevolence (*benevolentiae*) or of good pleasure (*complacentiae*)" (161). These are two ways in which God loves, and the verses cited above provide an example of each. Thus, it is not a contradiction in Scripture but "love" used in different ways.

In this excellent new work, you will find the classic Reformed distinctions that helped many students and theologians think about God and His Word. You can find them in other sources, but *On Theoloical Distinctions* is a unique and concise guide to this world of thought. In addition, placing the Latin and English side by side makes it easy to look at the original source and to begin to get an understanding of the Latin words that these theologians used in their theological discourse.

You can order the book through the Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn (<http://www.tua.nl>, click on "Webshop," then page through the catalog to "Scholastic Discourse," and click for English). If you do order it, they will send you the copy. You must then send payment in euros to the Netherlands. I have found that the best way to do this is to simply exchange dollars for euros at your bank and then send them by registered mail to the Netherlands. ■

Review: T. V. Moore, *The Last Days of Jesus* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, originally published in 1859, first Banner of Truth edition 1981). ISBN 9780851513218. 216 pages, paperback. \$8.99. Reviewed by Reverend Dr. C. N. Willborn, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Oak Ridge, TN, and Adjunct Professor of Church History at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

It is unusual in these days for an “old book” to receive a review. New publications can easily consume our attention. They receive the press, and they often are dealing with matters confronting the church at the time, and so they seem to be *timely*. Therefore, we read them to the exclusion of the older tried and tested works. Certainly Augustine, Calvin, Owen, Edwards, Hodge, Warfield, and others of like stature maintain a revered place on many bookshelves and even make their way onto a number of desks. For the most part, however, bookshelves (you may include iPads and Kindles) are being filled with books that are new and often address the apparent felt needs of the church and world. From theology to practice, new books seem to be flowing from older and newer publishers at an unparalleled rate. Therefore, reviewers and journals are busy providing the reading public with reviews.

While the publishing houses are churning out new books at an extraordinary rate, there has also been an unparalleled production of reprints over the past half century. From those books we call “classics”—e.g., Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*, Calvin’s *Institutes*, Luther’s *Bondage of the Will*, Edwards’ *Religious Affection*—to the multi-volume works of men like John Owen and Thomas Boston, the public has easy access to both old books and new books. While new books have numerous outlets for review—from online and print journals, magazines, and blogs—republications do not enjoy the same exposure to the readers of today. *The Confessional Presbyterian* has recognized a need to point her readers to some noteworthy reproductions.

But why review “old books”? Why should we even reprint “old books”? C. S. Lewis addressed these questions many years ago when he said, “A new book is still on its trial. . . . It has to be tested against the great body of Christian thought down the ages.” You see, many old books (which may not warrant the label “classic,” yet are worthy of rereading) and the classics have passed the test of time and theology. New books have not! Lewis challenges his readers to read one “old book” for every “modern” book they imbibe. R. C. Sproul goes so far as to say he has never written anything that hasn’t been said before and often said better. I think you get the gist of what these “modern” authors are saying—read the old books or you will not be as educated as you think you are!

But there is another reason one ought to read the old books—they are often so much more enriching. We live in

an age of “how-to” books that often leave one feeling like a laboratory rat (or whatever the animal rights folks let you experiment on these days). So much of Christian literature has a bent toward the psychological behaviorist genre of literature. Much, if not most, of the old writings were oriented toward the soul. That is, the writers were attempting to touch the intellect, emotion, and will, i.e., the whole being of man. The old writers understood that the heart of man must be changed in order for the behavior to be effected. Take a book like Thomas Watson’s *The Art of Divine Contentment*. Now there is a little book that works on all the senses of man with an aim to change man from the inside out *with the substance of divine theology*.

With this introduction to the present review, it should be no surprise that a previously published older book is under consideration. On top of that, the author of the book is not one of the most important names in the history of the church. In fact, the author is not one of the most prominent persons of his generation. He was, however, one of the leading pastor-scholars in the Southern United States during the second half of the 19th century. In the midst of a busy pastoral ministry, with a very uncivil war thrown into the middle of it all, Thomas V. Moore (1818–71) produced a number of fine works for the church of his day. Included among his works were biblical commentaries on Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Moore was trained for the gospel ministry, like so many others in the United States, at Princeton Theological Seminary under Charles Hodge, *et al.* He served as the shepherd-teacher to churches in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Richmond, Virginia, and Nashville, Tennessee. Two years after the War Between the States ended, T. V. Moore was elected by his peers as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (commonly called The Southern Presbyterian Church). He is buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Nashville, Tennessee (also the burial place of the eminent Southern theologian, Robert A. Webb).

In 1859, Moore published a delightful little book called *The Last Days of Jesus*. The purpose of this book is very simply to draw attention “to this wonderful and rather neglected portion of the earthly life of Jesus, and of throwing some light on the various points included in it.” The author carefully deals with the biblical material that concerns the forty days between the resurrection and ascension of our dear Savior. This is a most interesting and sometimes complicated period for us (e.g., the sojourners on the road to Emmaus didn’t recognize Christ) and Moore walks his readers through these pivotal days with a thorough command of the biblical texts. He explains in the introduction that he does not pretend to take up all the “critical” matters of the various texts, although his comments reflect his knowledge and mastery of them. He also apologizes for not attempting to harmonize the various events. While

apologizing, he explains his rationale. He does not attempt a harmony of the various events because of his conviction that they need no such harmonization. Moore contends that the “four forms of [the] commission,” for example, were never intended “to be clipped and mosaicked [sic] into one.” He continues by saying, “The advantage of taking the facts as they stand, rather than trying to make a harmony of them, as is usually done, will appear in the sequel. The gospel is a harp with four strings, and the attempts to twist them all into one string really destroy the harmony, instead of creating it” (xi).

As early as the introductory material, Moore draws the reader’s attention to the “forty days.” He reminds us of the significance of the number in Scripture. The first forty days of Noah introduced God’s wrath, while the second forty days “ushered in the second great chapter of human history.” Then there were the forty days of Moses on Mount Sinai in preparation for the establishment of “the Divine Institute.” Forty days Israel spent on the banks of Jordan preparing for “their entrance into the promised land.” Elijah spent forty days as a “prelude to the solemn scenes of Horeb.” Ninevah was given forty days to repent and avert God’s wrath. And, of course, our Savior’s forty days in the wilderness meeting the assaults of Satan, upholding his probation as the second Adam, and setting the stage for his public work as Mediator of a better covenant. Finally, the forty days of his preparation “for the glories of the ascension, and the return to heaven, when the everlasting doors were lifted up, to let the King of glory in.” During these forty days our LORD rehearsed “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (x). Here Moore eschews the “extravagant fancies of recent German writers” and their “mystical conjectures” and sets the readers on a grammatical-historical-theological approach to the forty days motif.

It shouldn’t surprise any reader that nineteenth century men of theological acumen and pastoral devotion held unswervingly to a high view of Holy Scripture. Moore points out the testimony to the divine nature of Scripture—*παραγραφή. θεο,πνευστό*—in the absence of a witness to the resurrection. The death of Christ is witnessed. The empty tomb is witnessed, “but that mysterious and stupendous event by which the grave was emptied is not recorded.” “Had these writers been inventing a fiction,” continues Moore, “such an omission would have been incredible. This fact being the main fact of the story, it would have been narrated with details of time and attendant circumstances in the most careful manner, so that all cavil should be excluded. But inasmuch as there was really no eyewitness to the fact itself, in its actual occurrence, they refrain from recording that occurrence, with a strict and scrupulous regard to historical accuracy that is very striking; and that is one of those minute marks of absolute veracity that would never occur to an inventor...” (18).

In establishing the divine nature of Scripture, Moore tips

his hat to his commitment to the supernatural nature of Christianity as a religion. It is a religion of a supernaturally-given revelation—the Holy Bible. It is a religion also of the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is “the main fact of the story,” according to Moore (18). The resurrection vindicated the redemptive work of Christ. Furthermore, the resurrection “confirms and connects the great doctrines of the Christian system.” “The new life of Noah from the ark and the deluge, the wonderful offering and deliverance of Isaac, the living bird in the purification of the leper, the living goat on the great day of atonement, and other facts of the Old Testament—all receive their full illumination, only by connecting them with the resurrection of our Lord” (27).

“There are few doctrines in the New Testament,” Moore explains, “that do not come legitimately under the scope of this period of the life of Jesus” (xi). Therefore, much of the author’s narrated exposition of the events is given to the doctrine that is imbedded in the various events of the forty days. History is full of doctrine, and the last forty days of Christ walking the earth is marked by doctrine. There is no “What would Jesus do?” in this venerable father’s teaching; it is all about what Jesus accomplished and taught. Yet, there is no dryness to Moore’s expositions. He makes the encounters with Jesus breathe with life. Here we can learn from our nineteenth-century fathers. They made the English language work for the gospel. Listen to a sampling of the soul-searching interrogatives that mark his writings (and his preaching). “How shall we know that he who died on the cross did not die, as all others die, for his own sin? How shall we know that he can carry us through the dark valley, and present us faultless before the throne, on the ground of his atoning work?” Now listen to the simple elegance of his answer: “Only by his returning from the presence of the Judge, and assuring us that the debt of sin is cancelled; by his returning from behind the veil in the Holiest of all, and assuring us that the sacrifice is accepted; by his returning from the dark valley, and assuring us that the monster is slain which made it terrible. This, Christ did in his resurrection, and hence its fundamental importance as the central fact of the Gospel” (25).

Moore assesses the needs of the disciples and shows how our Lord meets their needs. A loving address to the one grieving at the tomb (Mk 16:9; Jn 20:11–18). He rewarded the women for their obedience with his presence and entrusted them with work (Matt 28:9, 10). He came to Peter, the one who betrayed him most flagrantly (1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34), and restored the man. He brought challenging words of life to the doubters on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:18–35). On and on Moore deals with each event of our Lord’s resurrected days. He treats the condition of man and shows how the Redeemer proved effective and sufficient to meet the various needs. He assures his readers that our needs are the same as those first

century A.D. disciples and Christ Jesus is still answering the needs.

In addition to the very personal encounters between Jesus and his disciples, Moore works through the “apostolic commission” in each of the four biblical texts (Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts). In a word, we could say he proves the spirituality of the church from these portions of Scripture. Additionally, his handling of baptism is a fine example of covenantal consciousness so that the gathered nature of the church is stressed. Concerning the visible church Moore explains, “We believe, that like the family, and the state, it was designed by God to be an educational institute for the young, as well as for the old, and that this is one of its most precious features. The lambs are entrusted to the shepherd as well as the sheep, and belong to the flock as truly as they. So the children of believing parents are made disciples as truly as parents themselves, and as such have a right to the same ordinance of recognition and initiation” (144). The education the church offers is a spiritual education founded upon the Holy Scriptures, and so the didactic role of the church from corporate to family worship is stressed.

Another sterling mark of this little book is Moore’s use of church history to instruct and illustrate. He introduces numerous men and women to his readers who have been saved by the amazing grace of God and who serve as examples of God’s powerful work in ordinary lives. “Christianity is now itself the great standing miracle of the world, and its mighty works are not physical and bodily, but moral and spiritual. It still casts out demons, and has taken a John Newton, a Colonel Gardiner, or a savage Africaner, and transformed them into pure, gentle, and loving saints” (156). Moore takes the women who encountered our Savior near the tomb and throughout those forty days and shows how God appointed them to announce the Savior’s life and how women still play such a large role in the nurture and instruction of sons and daughters. “Thomas Halyburton acknowledges his great obligation to the early religious training of his mother. The mother of Philip Doddridge, the mother of the Wesleys, have come down to us linked with the piety of their illustrious children” (43). God has done great things, he is doing great things, and he will do great things. This Moore proves over and again in the lives of saints.

Moore concludes his study of the last days of Jesus with an examination of Acts 1:10, 11 and “The Parting Promise.” The author’s attention to detail is exemplified here when he points out the marvelous departure of our Savior and the abiding benediction that falls upon the church of Christ. “It was a touching fact that, in the Ascension, the Saviour was taken up in the very act of blessing his disciples. The benediction was begun on earth, but not ended, for ‘while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.’” “The

benediction still lingers in the air,” continues Moore, “and cheers the hearts of Christ’s people, and will continue to do so, until the words of the departing Saviour are swallowed up in the words that shall proclaim the coming Judge” (199). Note the eschatological emphasis suggested by the abiding benediction. We live under the good words of our Lord! Of this we are reminded when ministers of the gospel pronounce the benediction upon God’s covenant people to conclude our corporate worship. We look up with expectation of God’s blessings until that day.

In January 1859 a reviewer of this little volume wrote: “The combination of learning, ability, and piety, evinced in this and other publications of Dr. Moore, have secured for him ready access to the ear of the church. The peculiarly interesting and solemn nature of the occurrences which are here illustrated and unfolded, give to this his latest work a special attraction for Christians” (*The Princeton Review*, 31, no.1 [Jan 1859]: 169). Another reviewer lauded Moore for having provided the public with a work of “rare and original merit,” which is “a model of Scriptural exegesis” (*Southern Literary Messenger*, 28, no.2 [February 1859]:158). We think today’s readers will find the same true of this literary gem. The Banner of Truth is to be thanked for publication of this (and Dr. Moore’s other works) fine book. We can only hope that this review will whet the appetite of a new generation of readers to take it up and enjoy it. C. S. Lewis encouraged a former generation to read Athanasius’ *On the Incarnation*, “with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand”; so we challenge the twenty first century readers to breathe in the rich fragrance of *The Last Days of Jesus*. ■

Review: Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011). xl, 477 pages, cloth. ISBN 9780199740420. \$74. Reviewed by Reverend James Cassidy, Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Ringoes, New Jersey.

It is about time an updated, critical life of the great American systematician, Charles Hodge, has been written and published! The only other biography before this one was that of the Princeton theologian’s son, A.A. Hodge, which—while having much to commend it—is neither updated nor critical. Gutjahr has remedied that unfortunate situation, and has done so in style.

The volume presents itself in a way that we have come to expect from Oxford University Press. In fact, it excels expectations in format, layout, design, and illustrations. The illustrations themselves are worth the price of the book. It opens up with rough, but nicely executed, sketches of “Key Figures in Hodge’s Life.” There are various photographs of paintings of Hodge scattered through the book, placed in

chronological order so as to give the reader a sense of his aging as his life unfolds. Also included are pictures of various people (e.g., John Witherspoon, Archibald Alexander, etc.), places (e.g., Alexander Hall, Hodge's Wharf, Nassau Hall, etc.), and things (e.g., Hodge's House, Hodge's Chair, The Cane of Orthodoxy, etc.) in Hodge's life. It also comes complete with a very helpful select bibliography and index. Really, this book is the complete package.

In terms of the content of the biography itself, the reader is treated to an even greater feast. Gutjahr claims to have taken ten years on this project. I say "claims" because one stands in wonder at how he could have researched and written so much—and as well as he has—in just one decade. It is top notch in both quantity and quality. It really is an amazing accomplishment. The prose is clear, flowing beautifully without a hitch (though I did pick up several small typos which should have been picked up by the editor). The chapters are short, which makes for brisk reading. And the impression one receives of the Princeton professor is at once both sobering and inspiring. It is sobering because no man is perfect, and neither was Charles Hodge. Gutjahr has no problems with painting a very human picture of Hodge, without besmirching his legacy. But it is also inspiring because Gutjahr highlights quite nicely his great work, accomplishments, and perseverance in the midst of difficulties and struggles. Overall, we get what appears to be an accurate and faithful picture of the man, his life, and his work.

Two chapters in particular should be highlighted for their usefulness in terms of placing Hodge in historical and cultural context—chapters 15 and 16. The former chapter addresses the nature of American Christianity in Hodge's day. It is what Gutjahr called "democratic Christianity" (borrowing from the work of Nathan O. Hatch).¹ This is the notion, still prevalent today, that leadership in the church is to be given to all without distinction. However, over against this trend stood Princeton Seminary which was "strikingly undemocratic" (96). Gutjahr attributes this phenomenon to the Princeton founder's Federalism and elitism. However, this reviewer wonders if it was more out of a biblical conviction concerning having men in the ministry who have studied to show themselves approved such that the church ought not to lay hands on men hastily.

Be that as it may, Gutjahr's next chapter is on the founding of the *Biblical Repertory* which provides the reader with a good sense of trends in media technology during Hodge's time. While Hodge rejected the democratic view of church leadership, he did make great use of the print media to make his theology as popularly available as possible. Gutjahr explains that new advances in technology from papermaking

to logistics helped to make more printed works available to more people in quicker time. This was the means that Hodge would take up to counter trends in German Higher Criticism, seeking to challenge it at every point. It was also the forum in which he was challenged by one of the publication's most prolific contributors, Robert Bridges Patton. Patton explained to Hodge that the only way to be able to get into the German mind is to go and study in its universities. This was all the impetuous Hodge needed to apply for a study leave with the seminary to go and study abroad at the great places of critical European higher learning.

There are also, however, some foibles in other parts of the volume. Such range from the small and insignificant to the more important and central. This does not leave the book with fatal flaws, but it does leave it with some significant chinks, nonetheless. We have space here to highlight briefly only some of them.

Let's begin with the small and insignificant, and work our way up the range to the important and central. In chapter 22, the chapter entitled "The Imputation Controversy," Gutjahr makes reference to "Adam's choice to eat the apple" (135), which is odd, given the fact that we do not know what kind of fruit Adam ate. Also, in the same chapter, Gutjahr summarizes Princeton's position on original sin and redemption as an event in which God "was willing to forego the punishment for this initial sin" (136–7). This is not quite accurate. The Princetonians would have taught not that God forbore punishment of sin because of Christ's death, but that he laid the punishment for sin (both original and actual) on Christ. God does not "forego" punishing sin, according to Hodge, but rather pours it out upon a substitutional, vicarious sacrifice (e.g., see *Systematic Theology II*, 481). But these are just small defects, easily chalked up to the fact that our author is not a trained theologian. These small deficiencies should not detract from the overwhelming excellence of the book as a whole.

That said, however, there are two other items of concern I have about the book and how Gutjahr portrays Hodge's thought.

First, there is the matter of how Gutjahr portrays Hodge's doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. In a parenthetical statement, he claims that Hodge—unlike his son Archie and his successor B.B. Warfield—did not "formally teach" but only implied the view that the Scriptures were inerrant (275). This is correct only if "formally teach" means to use the word "inerrant." It is wrong—very wrong—however if "formally teach" entails the *concept* of inerrancy. Hodge's preferred term for the concept is "infallibility." This term is what he used to describe the idea that a human author of any particular book of Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit such that "the effect of inspiration was to preserve him from error in teaching" (*Systematic Theology I*, 155). In fact, this is the understanding

1. Nathan O Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

of the Bible grounded firmly within the Christian tradition, not only here in America during the modern period, but also throughout the world and the history of the church. From at least the Westminster Standards, down to today, to speak about the infallibility of the Scriptures is to speak of them as containing no error. In other words, one need not use the word “inerrancy” in order to teach the *concept* of inerrancy. And this is exactly what we see in the senior Hodge.

Secondly, Gutjahr overemphasizes and misconstrues the significance of Scottish Common Sense Realism (*hereafter*, SCSR) in Hodge’s thinking. To be sure, Hodge was influenced by SCSR. But there is a noticeable gap in Gutjahr’s (otherwise impeccable) research on Hodge. For instance, he seems to be working from an older school of scholarship which portrays Hodge and Old Princeton as being beholden to a form of SCSR which is rationalistic, modernistic, and overly optimistic concerning the nature and abilities of the unregenerate person. In this way, Gutjahr shows no evidence of having consulted with the newer scholarship as one might find it in the materials written by Andrew Hofferker² and Paul Helseth.³ This approach is systemic in the work, so we can only highlight some examples here.

The first example can be seen on pages 40–41 where Gutjahr pits Hodge’s Calvinism against that of Jonathan Edwards, saying that the former’s Calvinism “found a lighter touch” because he has a “slightly more hopeful view of the human condition” in which “every human held within themselves a moral sense capable of detecting virtue.” This statement, at best, suffers from a want of greater nuance. In fact, it is quite truncated. As we will try to show presently, Hodge’s view of sin and grace was in line with the Reformed and Augustinian tradition in which he stood. To say that every human being has the innate ability to detect moral virtue leaves the matter woefully retrenched.

Furthermore, it is not correct to say that “Hodge vacillated between [SCSR and Calvinism] depending on the setting and the purpose of his work” (203). Here Gutjahr argues for a putative antinomy between the earlier Hodge (exemplified in *The Way of Life*) in which he advocated a more Calvinistic (read: pessimistic) view of human nature, versus a later Hodge which advanced a more Scottish Realist (read: optimistic) notion of man’s abilities (exemplified in the opening of his *Systematic Theology*). In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. For Hodge, as we will explain more below, there is a great difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate man with regard to how he can know. What Hodge is attempting to explain in *The Way of Life* is the notion of what man is in his natural, unregenerate state. However, in the opening of his *Systematic Theology* he is assuming that one is regenerate as the task of doing theology is undertaken. A born again believer is able to arrive at the truth of Scripture only because of

the grace of God given to him. This grace serves to illuminate his mind and heart to know, understand, and love the truth of revelation. Therefore, there is no opposition in thought between the earlier and later Hodge in this regard. Gutjahr has simply attempted to compare apples to oranges—that is, comparing one aspect of Hodge’s theology to another, different aspect. To put it another way, with regard to the natural, unregenerate state of man Hodge was very pessimistic (in both books); but with reference to the regenerate believer he was optimistic on account of his high view of God’s grace in the sinner-become-saint (in both books).

Another example appears in chapter 19 where Gutjahr compares Hodge to Baron Alexander von Humboldt and concludes that both men were “products of the Enlightenment impulse” in which there “existed an optimism in human rationality” (117). What is even less accurate, however, is Gutjahr’s portrayal of Hodge as one who swung back and forth between a pietistic religion of the heart, and a rationalistic religion of the mind (118). In fact, for Hodge, such a dichotomy would never have occurred to him.

While it is true that all men everywhere are products of their times, at every turn Hodge rejected the Enlightenment impulse, never placed an unconditional trust in the unregenerate person’s natural rationality, nor did he raise the “heart” to a more prominent level than any other aspect of man’s being as if it alone was unaffected by sin. Throughout Hodge’s career he maintained the doctrine that man, by nature, is depraved in every aspect of his being and thus is unable to do good with regard to “the things of the Spirit” (See *Systematic Theology II*, 261). Nevertheless, there is what Calvin called the *sensus divinitatis* in humans which renders them without excuse for their rebellion against God. It is this sense of the divine, or the law written on the heart, that Hodge has in view when he appropriates so-called “Common Sense.” Furthermore, such sense only renders man capable of performing civil righteousness, or external good, but not able to do any good with regard to the things of God (Hodge, 263). It is only by regeneration, the grace of God making sinners to be born again, that both the heart and the mind can begin to be used rightly.⁴ Of course, there is God’s common grace which

2. See, for instance, his *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1981).

3. See, for instance, his “*Right Reason*” and *The Princeton Mind: An Unorthodox Proposal* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2010). Also, the discussion by Jeffrey C. Waddington in, “On the Shoulders of Giants: Van Til’s Appropriation of Warfield and Kuiper,” in this issue; especially footnote 45 and the literature cited there (see this issue, page 146).

4. *Systematic Theology III*, 16–17. Though, we should note, for Hodge there is a priority of the mind to the affections in the regenerate person’s growth in the spiritual life.

enables even the unregenerate to live and be productive in this life (See *Systematic Theology II*, 670–675). But, far from being an Enlightenment or “optimistic” view of humanity, this last idea presupposes the old Reformation doctrine of original sin and total inability.

To be sure, these weaknesses are not insignificant. And other discerning readers might have more items of concern (some might want to interact with Gutjahr’s evaluation of Hodge’s thoughts on slavery, the civil war, and his approach to his New School counterparts). Nevertheless, these are not intended to take away from the wonderful accomplishment which is this overdue biography of a great minister, theologian, educator, and mind. The volume ought to be celebrated, read, and read again. It is well written, well researched, and beautifully presented. Readers of this journal, especially, should delight in learning more about the man who was, and continues to be, a guardian of American—nay, confessionally Reformed—orthodoxy. ■

Review: J. Knox Chamblin, *Matthew: A Mentor Commentary*, 2 volumes (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010). 1592 pages (continuous pagination). ISBN 9781845503642 and 9781845503796. \$39.99 (cloth) and \$39.99 (cloth). Review by W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.

J. Knox Chamblin is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He did graduate work at Cambridge University and has a Doctorate of Theology from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. He taught for some thirty-four years in Jackson, Mississippi, first at Belhaven College and then at Reformed Theological Seminary. He retired from the ministry in 2001. Chamblin’s two volume commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, a much smaller version of which was published in the *Evangelical Commentary of the Bible*, is very well done. We will proceed mostly by way of summarizing Chamblin’s findings.

After a brief Preface, the commentary is divided into 17 “Sections,” followed by three Appendices, a Bibliography, Scripture Index, and Subject Index.

SECTION 1: “Approaching the Gospel of Matthew” (17–185), discourse on “The Story,” “The Apostle,” “The Scribe,” “The Evangelist,” “The Theologian,” and “The Teacher.”

“The Story” (18–24): All stories necessitate characters, a plot, and a storyteller. The main character, of course, is “Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). All of the other characters are subservient to Christ. The plot of the story revolves around the main character, “the Christ.” Who is this Jesus referred to in the very first verse of the Gospel? Why is He said to be the Son of David and the Son of Abraham? The storyteller, the Apostle Matthew, rather than

focusing on himself, unfolds the plot for us through the use of the characters—especially the main one: Christ Himself.

“The Apostle” (25–48): This Gospel, like the other three, remains anonymous. Perhaps this is so because it is really preferable to speak of “one” fourfold Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, than to refer to “the four Gospels.” Nevertheless, when it comes to the Gospel under study it is without serious question that Matthew the former tax collector (Matthew 9:9; 10:3), as confirmed by the witness of early church history, is the writer of this Gospel.

“The Scribe” (49–103): In Matthew 13:52, which is the final verse of Jesus’ discourse on the parables, we read: “Therefore every scribe who has been disciplined for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his treasury things new and old.” In this section Chamblin studies the fulfilling of Matthew in his “scribal role” under the headings of the design of this work, his approach to the task, his practice of drawing out “things old and new,” and the direct involvement of all three members of the Trinity in the task. The word order of this verse, “things new and old,” as well as Jesus’ statement “from the days of John the Baptist until now” (11:12) and “for all the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (11:13), tell us that with the coming of Jesus Christ “things new” began to take place. Christ is Himself the source of all things new. But we also read “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (11:13), thus telling us that the One spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures (“things old”) is being revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note here that Matthew’s Gospel contains more Old Testament quotations than any other Gospel account. This Gospel as a whole gives us both “things new and old.” It is in “the Scribe” portion of Section 1 that Chamblin overviews the relationship between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, along with the “Q source” material. Regrettably, the commentator favors the critical text rather than the majority text view of textual criticism, though this will not be a problem for some readers.

“The Evangelist” (104–119): Even though the New Testament never refers to any of the apostles as “evangelists,” it is still proper to see them as just that—those who proclaim the “good news” of Jesus Christ. As noted above, there is only one gospel that is set forth by four writers, and Matthew is one of them. This being so, he is necessarily an “evangelist.”

“The Theologian” (120–154): Not only is Matthew a scribe, an apostle, and an evangelist, he is also a theologian, and a master theologian at that. From beginning to end the Gospel account written by him is a message (*logos par excellence* about God (*Theos*). This is seen in Matthew’s teaching on “the purpose of God,” “the Son of God,” “the kingdom of God,” “the salvation of God,” and “the people of God.”

“The Teacher” (155–185): Matthew often refers to his main character, Jesus Christ, as “teacher.” And it is “the Teacher”

Himself who commissioned His apostles to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching* them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20). Teaching, then, is a primary task of the apostles. In this portion of the commentary Chamblin correctly argues for a pre-AD 70 writing of Matthew’s Gospel account.

A final interesting note on Section 1 is that the commentator closes Section 1 with prayer: thanking God for the gospel message and humbly asking that “in the writing of this commentary, may I assist rather than impede Your working in the hearts of those who read” (p 185). In the opinion of the present reviewer, Section 1 of this commentary is worth the price of the volumes by itself. It is extremely well done.

The remaining sixteen Sections of these volumes comment on the Gospel narrative itself. Chamblin has divided each Section into two or more parts in his exposition of the various chapters of this Gospel account.

SECTION 2: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” (187–211) studies Matthew 1:1–25. This Section is in twoparts: the first on verses 1–17 and the second on 1:18–25. Part I deals with the genealogy of Christ under the headings of “The Christ of God” and “The Wonders of God.” Part II has to do with the miraculous birth of the Christ-child. Interestingly, in his commentary on this second part, Chamblin avers (correctly, in this reviewer’s opinion) that the Isaiah 7:14 Immanuel prophesy, ultimately fulfilled with the virgin birth of Christ spoken to in Matthew 1:23, was initially “fulfilled”¹ in Isaiah’s own day with the birth of his son Mahar-shalal-Hash-Baz (“quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil”).

SECTION 3: “By Prophet Bards Foretold” (213–239) covers Matthew 2:1–23. The word “prophet” (*prophetes*) occurs four times in these verses. Whereas we were introduced to Isaiah in the first chapter, we now have Micah, Hosea, and Jeremiah, as well as Isaiah, in the second chapter. Part I of this Section comments on 2:1–12, wherein we encounter the Magi and the Star of Wonder along with Micah’s prophecy (5:2) of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem. Part II, on 2:13–23, has to do with the Christ-child’s family and their flight to and return from Egypt (in fulfillment of Hosea 11:1). Also, we read of Herod’s slaughter of the male children (as per Jeremiah 31:15). Finally we read of Jesus dwelling in Nazareth so that Isaiah’s prophecy (11:1; 49:7; 53:2–3) would be fulfilled that “He shall be called a Nazarene.” Chamblin’s analysis of the Nazarene fulfillment is particularly well done.

SECTION 4: “Make Straight, Make Straight, the Highway of the King” (241–268) deals with Matthew 3:1–17. So far Matthew has traced Jesus Christ’s journey from Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth. Now His coming from Galilee to the Jordan marks the next stage in Christ’s incarnate life. In Part I of this

Section (3:1–12) we read of John the Baptist, who (like Samson and Samuel before him) is a Nazarite for his entire life, and comes in fulfillment of Isaiah’s (40:3) and Malachi’s (3:1; 4:5) prophecies that God would send a His messenger (“in the spirit and power of Elijah”; Luke 1:17) as a herald for the coming Messianic King. In Part II (3:13–17), John baptizes Christ “to fulfill all righteousness.” At His baptism Jesus is anointed by the Spirit, empowering Him to carry out His Messianic function. The Father’s pronouncement, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” completes the investiture.

SECTION 5: “The Savior of the World is here” (269–298) examines Matthew 4:1–25. In Part I of this Section (4:1–11) Jesus Christ “is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Having repelled all three of Satan’s temptations by standing on the Rock-solid foundation of the living Word of God, Jesus is ministered to by a group of angels. In Part II (4:12–25), after hearing of John the Baptist’s arrest, Jesus returns to Galilee, where He chooses to live in Capernaum in fulfillment of Isaiah 9. Here Jesus selects His first disciples and begins His preaching ministry, declaring that He is ushering in the long awaited kingdom of heaven.

SECTION 6: “Go Tell it on the Mountain” (299–490) comments on Matthew 5:1–7:29. The Sermon on the Mount, which is discussed in eight parts, is the first of Jesus’ five great Matthean discourses. According to Chamblin, even though there are some differences, this sermon and that of Luke 6:17–49 are likely the same. Part I (5:1–2) introduces the Sermon. Part II (5:3–12) explains the nine beatitudes, all of which are rooted in Old Testament teaching. These verses, along with the “salt and light” verses of Part III (5:13–16), lay the foundation for “the righteousness of the kingdom” taught in 5:17–7:12. Part IV (5:17–48) deals with “the good works” in accordance with God’s law. The introductory verses 17–20 are foundational for all that follows in verses 18–48. Verses 17–20 relate the Old Testament to the New, and verses 21–48 “expound the way of righteousness,” the kind of righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees (5:20). We are to be “perfect, just as [our] heavenly Father is perfect.” The verses studied in Part V (6:1–18), as verse 1 teaches, are about “doing righteousness.” Here Jesus is still expounding that form of God-honoring righteousness which exceeds that of the Pharisees: it is a righteousness which involves almsgiving (6:2–4), prayer (6:5–15), and fasting (6:16–18). The concluding verses of chapter 6 are discussed in Part VI (6:19–34). Like the earlier verses of the same chapter, these verses reveal that the “surpassing righteousness” that the Lord says is required for entering heaven (5:20) is “devoted not to advancing oneself

1. “Fulfilled” is this reviewer’s word, as Chamblin is somewhat uncomfortable with stating that the promise was “fulfilled” in the birth of Isaiah’s son. According to him the “fulfillment” of Isaiah’s prophesy may only be applied to the virgin birth of Christ.

but to pleasing, obeying, and honoring the heavenly Father.” God’s people are to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (verse 33). The verses expounded in Part VII (7:1–12) conclude “the long middle section [5:17–7:12] of the Sermon on the Mount.” They have to do with making proper judgments (7:1–6), seeking good gifts in prayer (7:7–11), and doing righteousness (7:12). Part VIII (7:13–29) brings us to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has proclaimed the blessings of the kingdom (5:3–16), He has spoken of the righteousness of the kingdom (5:17–7:12), and now He tells us about the “two alternatives,” the way of the wide road or the way of the narrow road (7:13–14). There is no *tertium quid*. There are those who make true professions and those who make false professions of faith in Christ (7:15–23). There are those who build wisely and those who build falsely (7:24–27). And there are two kinds of teachers: those who teach with authority and those who teach falsely (7:28–29).

SECTION 7: “All Authority and Power” (491–560) looks at Matthew 8:1–9:38. In this Section we read about the continuing manifestation of Christ’s authority both in His teaching ministry and His “mighty works.” In Part I (8:1–17) “Christ, the Healer” manifests His power by healing a leper (8:1–4), the centurion’s servant (8:5–13), Peter’s mother-in-law (8:14–15), and demon-possessed individuals (8:16–17). In Part II (8:18–34), the sovereign authority of Christ is revealed in His authority over the disciples (8:18–22), a storm (8:23–27), and demons (8:28–34). Part III (9:1–17) reveals Jesus as a “friend for sinners.” After He returns to Capernaum, He heals a paralytic and forgive his sins (9:1–8), He brings “good news” to Matthew the tax collector and his friends (9:9–13), and He explains the proper view of fasting (9:14–17). Part IV (9:18–38) teaches us about Christ’s ministry to persons who are suffering and in distress. First there are a grieving father, an afflicted woman, and a dead child (9:18–26). Then there are two blind men and a mute demoniac (9:27–34). And finally there is the need of laborers for God’s harvest (9:35–38).

SECTION 8: “Publish Glad Tidings” (561–600) explains Matthew 10:1–42. In chapter 10 of this Gospel account we have Jesus’ second great discourse. In Part I (10:1–15) we have Jesus choosing His twelve apostles (10:1–4) and commissioning them for their labor in His kingdom (10:5–15). In Part II (10:16–42) we have the major portion of the discourse itself, which in some sense anticipates the Great Commission of 28:18–20. In 10:16–25 the Lord gives a charge to His “vulnerable missionaries” (they are being sent as sheep into the midst of wolves), gives them encouragement for their journey (10:26–33), warns them against “double-mindedness” (10:34–39), and grants His promise to those who receive the witness of His missionaries (10:40–42).

SECTION 9: “Who is on the Lord’s Side?” (601–679) develops Matthew 11:1–12:50. In this Section we come to the question

of “who is on the Lord’s side?” In Part I (11:1–15), we have the inquiry of John the Baptist regarding Christ’s identity along with Christ’s response to John. This is followed by Jesus’ address to the crowd regarding John. Part II (11:16–24) covers the Lord’s parable to “the dissatisfied generation” (11:16–19) and His reproach of certain unrepentant cities. Part III (11:25–12:21) “celebrates the glorious splendor of Jesus’ majesty.” In 11:25–30 He is declared to be the “Son of God.” In 12:1–14 He is the “Son of Man” who is “Lord over the Sabbath.” And in 12:15–21 He is seen as the “Servant of the Lord” (in fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1–4). Finally, in Part IV (12:22–50), Jesus casts out a demon by the Spirit of God to reveal that “the kingdom of God has come upon you,” after which He is accused of performing this miracle by the power of Beelzebub. Christ’s response is that His accusers have committed the unpardonable sin (12:22–37). The Lord then has dealings with “the evil and adulterous generation” of His day, warning them against rejecting His Lordship over them, and defining His “new family” as those who do the will of His Father in heaven (12:38–50).

SECTION 10: “My People, Give Ear, Attend to My Word” (681–729) clarifies Matthew 13:1–58. The thirteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew gives us the third great discourse. It consists of seven parables concerning the “kingdom of heaven” (which is one and the same with the “kingdom of God”). Chamblin begins this chapter by explaining that a “parable” (*parabole*) is somewhat similar to an Old Testament proverb (*marshal*). In fact, “almost every instance of *parabole*” in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) “translates the noun *marshal* or the verb *marshal*.” Parables are meant both to “conceal and reveal truth.” Chamblin also explains the difference between a parable and an allegory. The former is an extended simile, whereas the latter is an extended metaphor. As expounded in Parts I–III, the parables of Matthew 13 are those of the “soils” (13:3–23), the “wheat and the weeds” (13:24–30, 36–43), the “mustard seed” (13:31–32), the “yeast” (13:33), the “hidden treasure” (13:44), the “pearl” (13:45–46), and the “net” (13:47–50). In 13:34–35 Jesus gives a brief commentary on parables, in fulfillment of Psalm 78:2. And in 13:51–58 we read of “two opposing responses.” In 13:51–52 we have positive reply of “the school of disciples” and in 13:53–58 we have the negative reply of “the people of Nazareth.” These typify the groups distinguished by Jesus in 13:10–17.

SECTION 11: “Comes the Moment to Decide” (745–827) exegeses Matthew 14:1–16:20. The Section under study, bracketed by 14:1–2 (Herod Antipas’ response) and 16:15–16 (Peter’s question), has the question “Who is Jesus?” as its major theme. Part I (14:1–12) deals with Herod Antipas’ execution of John the Baptist. Part II (14:13–36) studies Jesus as the Great Provider in the feeding of the five thousand (14:13–21), in His mastering of the waves of the sea and calming a storm (14:22–33), and in His

miraculous healing ministry (14:34–36). In Part III (15:1–20) Jesus is confronted by a delegation of Scribes and Pharisees who accuse Him of transgressing the “tradition of the elders” (15:1–2). First, He refutes His accusers telling them that they are the ones who have violated the Word of God by holding to man-made traditions (15:3–9). Jesus then teaches the crowd and His disciples concerning the proper understanding of the law (15:10–20). As stated by Chamblin, “the objects of Jesus’ assault in this passage are the commandments of men (15:9), not the revealed laws of God, including those ceremonial in character. Jesus does not here demean or diminish the rulings of [the ceremonial law], but declares that their purpose in redemptive history is now fulfilled” (791). Part IV (15:21–39) deals with Jesus in the region of Tyre and Sidon (15:1). Here we find Jesus among the Gentiles. His initial encounter is with a Canaanite woman who is saved by her “great faith” (15:22–28). His second meeting is with a crowd where He heals the infirm and feeds the four thousand (15:29–39). Finally, in Part V (16:1–20) we see the obscuring of the truth concerning “who is Jesus?” by the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:1–12) and the embracing of truth concerning “who is Jesus?” by the disciples (16:13–20). Simon Peter’s confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” is central.

SECTION 12: “Your Last and Fiercest Strife is Nigh” (829–869) elucidates Matthew 16:21–7:27. Part I (16:21–28) marks the beginning of the final year of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Jesus tells His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem where He will suffer death and be raised again from the dead. Jesus assures His apostles that the way of His Messiahship necessitates His suffering. It will be the same for those who would be His disciples. The good news, however, is that His victory over the forces of darkness in His suffering guarantees His triumphant return in glory. Part II (17:1–13) relates the Transfiguration of Christ in the presence of the “two earthly witnesses” Moses and Elijah, along with the “heavenly witness” of the Father. The mountaintop experience of His apostles includes their understanding that the promised coming of Elijah “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Malachi 4:5–6) has been fulfilled in the person and work of John the Baptist. Part III (17:14–27) concludes this Section, with Jesus healing a demon-possessed epileptic boy, foretelling His death and resurrection, and providing the Temple tax.

SECTION 13: “I Love Thy Church, O God” (871–911) explicates Matthew 18:1–35. In this chapter we have the fourth great discourse, which focuses attention on the relationships that exist in the New Testament church. In Part I (18:1–14), the disciples’ question “who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (18:1) leads into the Lord’s teaching on the “little child” (18:2–5), the “peril of offenses” (18:6–9), and the “loving Father” (18:10–14). In Part II (18:15–20) Jesus discourses on the proper function of biblical church discipline. And in Part

III (18:21–35), using the parable of “the king and his servants,” He speaks on the necessity of forgiving one’s brother “seventy times seven” if need be.

SECTION 14: “Who in the Lord’s Name Cometh” (913–1115) expounds Matthew 19:1–22:46. Matthew 19:1–2 finds Jesus departing Galilee and coming to “the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.” This is the Lord’s final journey to Judea and Jerusalem, which will climax in His death and resurrection. In Part I (19:3–12) the Pharisees question Jesus on the subject of divorce, and He answers with the biblical view of divorce based on passages from the Old Testament: Genesis (1:27; 5:1; 2:24) and Deuteronomy (24:1–4) (19:3–9). He then responds to the disciples’ question on the same subject (19:10–12). Part II (19:13–15) has to do with Jesus and little children. Part III (19:16–30) studies Jesus and the rich young ruler, followed by His teaching the disciples on the proper view of riches and the kingdom. Part IV (20:1–16) examines Jesus’ parable about the workers in the vineyard. It is meant to teach both the “goodness of the Master” as well as the “equality of the workers.” In the eyes of God all of His chosen ones are objects of His “great generosity.” Part V (20:17–28) has Jesus giving His third prophecy of His impending death and triumph (20:17–19), followed by His teaching on the biblical view of “honor here and hereafter,” the main lesson being that “whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant” (20:20–28). Part VI (20:29–34) once again reveals the grace and miracle-working power of the God-man in healing two blind men. Part VII (21:1–11) is on “the triumphal entry.” It is expounded in three sections: “the commands of the Lord” regarding the donkey He will ride (21:1–3), the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah (21:4–5), and the crowd’s responsive acclaim for the Son of David in accordance with Psalm 118 (21:6–11). Part VIII (21:12–17) is on “great David’s greater Son.” Like the persons on pilgrim journey as per Psalm 118, Jesus Himself, as the Lord of the Temple, enters the Temple where He finds people desecrating the house of God. This house that was to be a “house of prayer” has become a “den of thieves.” There in the Temple, the Lord performs works of mercy on the infirm and receives the laudatory cries of the children in fulfillment of Psalm 8. Leaving the Temple Jesus goes to Bethany. In Part IX (21:18–22) Jesus returns to the city of Jerusalem and curses a fruitless fig tree as a sign against fruitless Israel, after which He gives the disciples a lesson on prayer. Part X (21:23–32) finds Jesus back in the Temple where He is challenged by the chief priests and the elders of the Jews as to the authority level vested in Him to execute judgment on things taking place in the Temple. Jesus responds by asking them a question about John the Baptist and preaching the parable of the “two sons.” As they refuse to answer Christ’s question, He refuses to answer their question. Part XI (21:33–46) studies the parable of the “wicked tenants.” Although this parable is

spoken to the people in general, its real focus is on the chief priests and Pharisees, who understood this. The message is clear: God's judgment is coming upon Israel. The kingdom will be taken from Israel and "given to a nation [the church] bearing the fruits of it." Part XII (22:1–14) expounds another parable, i.e., that of the "wedding feast." It, too, is directed to the leaders and is a parable of judgment—both national (Israel) and individually. In Part XIII (22:15–22) the Pharisees and the Herodians connive to trap Jesus with a question about the lawfulness of paying taxes to Caesar. Once again the Lord overturns the plots of His enemies and left His audience "marveling" over His answers. Part XIV (22:23–33) deals with the Sadducees and their deceitful intentions as they interrogate Jesus regarding the Levirate law (see Deuteronomy 25:5–10). Jesus overturns His inquisitors pointing out that their problem is that they do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God. Part XV (22:34–40) has to do with a lawyer's question concerning "which is the great commandment in the law?" In retort Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 and concludes that "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Finally we come to Part XVI (22:41–46) which concludes this Section. In these verses Jesus asks the Pharisees, "the Christ?... "whose Son is He?" Their answer, "the Son of David," is correct, but their understanding is faulty. The Lord quotes Psalm 110:1 to show that David can rightly call his Son "Lord" (*Kurios*) because Christ is David's greater Son. The result: "No one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore." Here we see, comments Chamblin, "the Teacher who never attended the right schools (John 7:15–18) confound[ing] the greatest theologians in the land" (1114).

SECTION 15: "See the Judge, our Nature Wearing" (1117–1263) considers Matthew 23:1–25:46. This is the fifth and final of Jesus' great discourses. In Part I (23:1–39) Jesus is speaking to the multitudes and His disciples in the Temple area. He begins by discussing "the ways of pride and of humility" (23:1–12). He then pronounces seven oracles of woe on the scribes and Pharisees concluding with a strong warning concerning "the condemnation of hell" (23:13–33). And in the final verses Jesus speaks about the soon-to-come judgment on Jerusalem (23:34–39). Part II (24:1–51) opens with Jesus moving from the Temple area to the Mount of Olives. The chapter opens by giving us the setting (24:1–3). Next the Lord speaks of the "signs of the times" (24:4–14) and the tribulation that will come upon the Jewish nation (24:15–21). Jesus then reveals "the prospect of the end" (24:22–28), the "imposter's coming deceptions" (24:23–26), and "the coming of the Son of Man" (24:29–31). The chapter concludes with the Lord's teaching on "the way of wisdom" (24:32–51). Sadly, Chamblin does not see verse 34 of this chapter ("Assuredly I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things

are fulfilled") as governing all that has preceded it. The clear implication of this verse is that those things said in verses 1–33 of this chapter will all take place prior to the "passing away" of Jesus' own generation. This mistaken exegesis necessitates an unnatural flow of the chapter's import. Part III (25:1–13) is on the parable of the "ten virgins." Part IV (25:14–30) follows with the parable of "talents." Part V (25:31–46) concludes the chapter with Jesus speaking about His second coming and the judgment which will occur at that time.

SECTION 16: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (1265–1453) reflects on Matthew 26:1–27:66. As stated by Chamblin: "Now begins the long narrative that concludes the book, the series of events for which Matthew has been preparing readers since his gospel began." Part I (26:1–16), having finished His Olivet discourse, Jesus returns to "the most poignant of all His prophecies," i.e., His soon-coming cross work, which will now take place within a matter of days. In this part we have a plot to kill the Lord (26:1–5), His anointing at Bethany (26:6–13), and Judas Iscariot and the chief priests (26:14–16). Part II (26:17–35) covers the preparations for the Passover meal (26:17–20), Jesus' prophecy of His betrayal (26:21–25), the institution of the Lord's Supper (26:26–30), and the prophecies concerning the Shepherd and His sheep (26:31–35). In Part III (26:36–46) we read of "the suffering Savior praying alone" in three "scenes." Part IV (26:47–75) overviews the betrayal of Christ (26:47–56), Jesus' appearance before the Jewish authorities (26:57–68), and Peter's denials of Christ (26:69–75). Part V (27:1–26) is on the verdict of the Jewish authorities (27:1–2), Judas' suicide and the field of blood (27:3–10), and Jesus in the presence of Pontius Pilate (27:11–26). Finally, in Part VI (27:27–66) we study the Savior being mocked (27:27–31), the crucifixion of Christ (27:32–44), the death of the Savior (27:45–50), the effects of the death of Christ (27:51–54), the vigil of the women (27:55–56), the burial of Christ (27:57–61), and the guarding of the tomb (27:62–66).

SECTION 17: "Thine Be the Glory, Risen, Conquering Son" (1455–1501) gives insight into Matthew 28:1–20. This is the final chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. In Part I of this Section Chamblin first considers the five accounts (Matthew 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8 [the commentator's errant "critical text" view is obvious here]; Luke 24:1–53; John 20:1–31; 21:1–25; and 1 Corinthians 15) of the resurrection of Christ and the effects of this event on various individuals. In Part II (28:1–10) he then proceeds to study Matthew's version of the women and the angels (28:1–7) and the women and Jesus (28:8–10). This is followed in Part III (28:11–20) by a consideration of the "propagation of lies" by the chief priests (28:11–15) and the giving of the Great Commission (28:16–20).

Appendix A: "Jewish Authorities at the Time of Jesus" (1502–1517) addresses the priesthood (the high priest and chief priests), the parties (the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the

Herodians), the scholars (the scribes, lawyers, teachers, and rabbis), and the councils (local and supreme) of Jesus' time.

Appendix B: "Chronological Matters" (1518–1521) covers suggested chronologies for Jesus' ministry and for Passion Week.

Appendix C: "Old Testament Quotations in Matthew" (1522–1523) cites the various quotes from the books of the Old Testament canon.

Conclusion:

Chamblin's commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew is a good work. The organization is striking; the exegesis is impressive; the lucidity is imposing; and the devotional aspect (immediately recognizable in the commentator's use of hymnody in the title of each section), which draws us closer to the Savior, is arresting. Particularly noteworthy is his interaction with the original language in each passage of the Gospel account. This reviewer also found the commentator's studies on the five Matthean dominical discourses to be very helpful. There are weaknesses, some of which have been mentioned in the review. The major criticism is that the author's use of the critical text rather than the majority text view of textual criticism has negative repercussions. Overall, this is a very fine work. It is highly recommended.

Review: Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2007). 715 pages. ISBN 9780830825677. \$40.00 (cloth). Reviewed by Rev. Daniel F. Patterson, Pastor of Second Parish Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Portland, Maine.

It is hard, if not impossible, to overestimate the importance of Eric Johnson's book for the fields of psychology and Christian counseling. The topic of the relationship between psychology and theology has been a dividing topic for the past five decades. This makes his goal of proposing a Christian psychology no small task. Johnson, who holds a Ph.D from Michigan State University, is a psychologist and associate professor of pastoral theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this massive, scholarly volume he proposes a comprehensive matrix for counseling that flows from a Christian understanding of human beings as those made in the image of God and meant to reflect His glory.

This review will consist of two parts. The first will set forth a substantial, chapter by chapter summary of the book, detailing its most important contributions. This is not always necessary in a review and sometimes even inappropriate. However, the size of this book may cause some readers to hesitate to purchase it. The outline strives to whet the reader's

appetite and remove any such reservations. The second, and substantially shorter part, hopes to provide several observations that ultimately commend this book for serious students of psychology and theology.

Summary

Foundations for Soul Care consists of eighteen chapters, divided into four parts. In addition, there is a helpful epilogue and two intriguing appendices that every reader will want to read.

In Part I, entitled "Background to the Predicament," Johnson provides us with three chapters that detail a biblical and historical perspective on the place the Scriptures have held in Christian soul care. In chapter one, Johnson argues that the "central underlying thrust of the whole Bible is an articulation of the glory of the Triune God" (pg. 28). This goal is realized, however, through human participation. The Bible's agenda, therefore, must be understood to promote (though in a secondary sense) the well-being of humans. Though the genres of the Bible reflect this in varying degrees, Johnson believes that the Bible provides a pervasive soul-care agenda. From here Johnson provides us with a brief biblical theology of soul-care in Old and New Testaments, describing them as having an "aretegenic," that is, a virtue-shaping, function (pg. 33). He then surveys passages in the Scriptures which reveal this aretegenic function.

Chapter two provides the reader with a helpful survey of how the Scriptures have been used in the history of soul-care. Here Johnson pulls from the literature of the early church fathers, Augustine, and medieval and Reformation theologians, particularly noting the vast impact of the Reformation on soul-care (pg. 50). Special mention is made of the Puritans as they "bequeathed the greatest treasury of soul-care literature written in the English language" (pg. 60). The rest of chapter two surveys Christianity's interaction with science and the reign of modernism, including Barth's impact on soul care in the twentieth century. Here Johnson shows how modernism and postmodernism have ruled in the arena of soul care, while the church has, sadly, abdicated its role.

Chapter three outlines how this has led to what Johnson calls, at the beginning of Part One, the "Christian Counseling wars" (pg. 25). This chapter is one of the most helpful in all the book as it surveys the place of the Bible in current Christian soul-care paradigms. The current reviewer knows of no other more comprehensive survey. Of particular interest to pastors and seminary professors will be Johnson's survey (and critique) of the Biblical Counseling Movement (BCM), founded and defended by Jay Adams. This movement has argued that the Bible should be the counselor's *sole and sufficient* textbook for counseling, with a heavy emphasis on the principle of the antithesis. Over the years, however, the BCM has developed a varied geography. This leads Johnson

to distinguish different approaches within the BCM. “Traditional Biblical Counseling” (TBC) adheres very closely to the emphases of its founder, Jay Adams, with its emphasis on the antithesis. However, out of the BCM has also grown what Johnson describes as “Progressive Biblical Counseling” (pg. 109) or PBC. This approach is embodied in the views of many at the *Christian Counseling and Education Foundation* located across the street from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In critiquing the BCM, Johnson notes that it has “come to define itself implicitly almost entirely in terms of the antithesis principle” (pg. 111) and because of this has “tended toward an isolationist, ‘against culture’ mindset” (pg. 111). However, common grace and the antithesis, Johnson argues, are corollaries, both of which must be affirmed (pg. 115). “Creation grace” Johnson believes, “particularly God’s goodness to those who oppose him, gives God tremendous glory, and if *Christians* minimize or neglect it, who will give glory to God for that grace? Non-Christians will not” (pg. 115, emphasis Johnson).

Johnson does note, however, that this mindset against culture is seen much less in PBC. In closing the chapter Johnson notes that it was by far the most difficult chapter for him to write (pg. 124), but he concludes that it is an important and necessary part of scholarship.

In Part II, which consists of chapter four through seven, Johnson studies the major practices required for a scientific discipline. Christians must, he argues, develop a hermeneutic that enables them to read and interpret the most important texts available to them regarding the description of human beings (pg. 130). These texts are Scripture, the Christian tradition, and modern psychology.

Johnson begins Part II with what he describes as a brief “archeology” (pg. 131) of the disciplines of psychology and theology and their respective objects. This is meant to be a sociohistorical study of both of these disciplines in order to highlight what Johnson believes to be a faulty dualism in which theology and psychology are viewed as competing, if not warring disciplines. What we need, Johnson argues, “is a single, comprehensive, holistic discipline that seeks to understand individual human beings, using all of the available and relevant sources” (pg. 143) For the Christian, this

1. Johnson explains: “Speech acts are acts that use language to accomplish things, for example to describe, motivate or express ourselves. Most statement, whether written or spoken, are a result of the intention of their speaker to communicate something. Consider, for example, Mary telling John, ‘The grass needs to be mowed.’ This statement has meaning, but it is not immediately clear what it is. It may be a description of the length of the grass, or it may actually be a request to mow the grass. Mary’s *intended* sense is termed the *illocutionary* meaning of the speech-act, and the issuing of that statement is called an illocutionary act. However, the same statement can also be considered a perlocution, if it produces an

would include the Scripture as its supreme, or controlling, text. Johnson presents the philosophical warrant for using the Bible within a Christian psychology, arguing that many epistemologists have concluded that modernist standards for what counts as knowledge are far too high for most of our beliefs. If this is the case, then human knowing, in general, is quite different than modernism supposes and belief in God is fundamentally no different from any other basic belief (pg. 147). Referencing Calvin, Johnson argues, “the *clear truths* of Scripture are self-authenticating; ultimately they are as worthy of being considered knowledge as any other clear truth, like the proposition ‘George Washington was the first president of the United States,’ and my recollection that I visited Texas in 2003” (pg. 147, emphasis Johnson).

Christians in psychology should be able, then, to use the Bible as part of their own version of a science of human beings and soul care and, in fact, should use all the means at their disposal. But lest one believe that Johnson is arguing that the Bible is just one text among many that the Christian psychologist studies and is not essentially different, Johnson argues, “Until biblical study is seen to be an integral and pervasive part of a Christian psychology/counseling program, the integration project will be fundamentally flawed” (pg. 151). Johnson goes as far as to argue that all the faculty in Christian departments of psychology should have training in and a working knowledge of biblical and theological studies, and that they should employ what he describes as a doctrine expert who is able to teach the application of Scripture to the study of human beings.

In the rest of chapter four, Johnson engages in a rigorous and academic polemic for a Christian philosophy of psychology. Here he defines what a science is, outlines the epistemological context of human knowledge, and the epistemological context of scientific knowledge, and also shows how one’s foundational worldview is relevant to the study of human beings. Here Johnson displays a strong grasp of philosophy, particularly the area of epistemology. His reading (and appreciation) of Van Til is evident as he exposes the folly of modernism and its adoption of the myth of neutrality.

In chapter five, Johnson presses home his belief that the Scripture has “ultimate authority over all of psychology and soul care and is the most significant source of knowledge about human beings and their psychospiritual problems” (pg. 171). The Bible possesses a “reorienting conceptual and aesthetic power which, when unleashed, creates new ways of seeing human beings, treating their problems and promoting their remediation.”

Chapter six advances Johnson’s agenda that the Bible itself must be allowed to direct us how it should be used in Christian soul care. Here Johnson engages in the topic of illocutionary and perlocutionary intent.¹ This is one of the more complex

sections of the book, but allows the reader to understand how the various genres of Scripture can be tapped by the Christian psychologist for use in counseling.

A word should be said here about the danger that some may feel is lurking in the background: the atomistic exegesis that is found in some sectors of the BCM. Johnson takes great care in encouraging his readers to understand the various genres and passages in the Scriptures in light of their redemptive-historical context so as to guard against misapplication of Scripture. There is not even a hint in Johnson's writing that the Bible is to be used as a sort of Chilton's manual for psychology and counseling. The "redemptive-historical metanarrative" of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation must frame the Christian psychologist's understanding of human beings, with Christ as the central focus of the Christian life (pg. 213).

Chapter seven provides the Christian counselor and psychologist with a framework by which to understand and interpret the "texts" of modern psychologies in a way that enhances and strengthens the Christian tradition, without compromising its most foundational commitments to the Scriptures. This includes, according to Johnson, the task of learning to read critically and Christianly. The six guidelines for Christian reading on pages 222–223 are phenomenal and are worth the price of the book. These guidelines are meant to aid the Christian soul-care provider in "translating" the modern texts of psychology. The rest of chapter seven addresses what is meant by translation, what are the prerequisites for becoming a good translator and what steps are involved in translating the text of another community of psychology as well as the difficulties in engaging in the task of translation. The brevity of this summary of chapter seven is not meant to take away from the weightiness of this subject or the skill with which Johnson presents his arguments. There is, perhaps, no better explanation available today of how the Christian psychologist/counselor can rightly use modern psychology in his or her field.

Part III of *Foundations for Soul Care* is entitled "Let There Be Humans: The Semiodiscursive Constitution of Human Beings." This is, without a doubt, the most important section in the entire book. Here Johnson explores humans as those creatures made in the image of God, who as creatures made in God's image, humans, through discourse and relationship, develop into "signs" of God (pg. 261). Semiotics is the discipline that deals with the representation of meaning. The most basic type of representation is a sign, but a sign is anything that points to something else. Johnson argues, "While almost anything can be a sign of something else, soul care is interested in the referential function of various aspects of human life: language, emotions, mental images, actions and other people, and texts in general, including narratives" (pg. 13). Humans,

being made in the image of God, have a relatively high degree of semiotic correspondence, meant to reflect the glory of God.

In chapter eight, Johnson begins this section of the book not with a word about man, but about God who is the ground and source of the created order. God is infinitely glorious and God's creation is a stage on which his glory is displayed (pg. 263). Pulling from theological giants such as Jonathan Edwards, Herman Bavinck, John Calvin, John Murray and others, Johnson outlines the progressive revelation of God throughout the Scriptures. Here he outlines various divine modes of the Word of God: the eternal Son of God as the word of God, and the eternal Son made man, Jesus Christ. It is Christ who "has truly loved God the way humans were supposed to" (pg. 269). It is in Jesus Christ that the glory of God is revealed (Jn. 1:14; Col. 1:15, 2:9; Heb. 1:1–3). Jesus is *the* sign of God on earth. "As a result," Johnson argues, "Christ's form is the fundamental form toward which all human development is moving. For Christians, there can be no psychology without reference to Jesus Christ" (pg. 269).

Johnson then goes on to outline how creation (and its constituent modes of nature, personal agency, and sociocultural reality) is a sign of the Word of God, meant to glorify God. Here Johnson is keen to remind the reader that the study of signs is not something new in the history of soul-care or even in the church. Augustine wrote about signs at length as did other theologians throughout history.

Not only are there divine modes of the Word of God in creation, but also discursive modes of the Word of God in creation. This includes the Scriptures in general, and the gospel in particular. Though Johnson's way of speaking here may seem peculiar as he speaks of signs and modes, perlocution and illocution, there can be no doubt that Johnson seeks to ground his view of human beings and human nature in the biblical teaching about the image of God in man.

Chapter nine provides us with analysis of human life grounded in Scriptures, positing that the Scripture teaches a fundamentally relational orientation for human life. This is so because created reality originates from a God who himself exists in perfected and unending interpersonal relationship with himself. God therefore, not self, is ultimate in human life and life only has meaning in relationship to God (pg. 297). The task of this chapter, then, is "to describe the basic semiodiscursive meaning-structures and intertextuality of human life" (pg. 299). Here Johnson provides some of the most insightful analysis of human meaning, from memory to mental imagery, to human actions, that this reviewer has ever read.

effect in its hearer/reader. When a statement causes such an effect, it is also called a perlocutionary act. Speakers usually have desired effects they wish to be realized through their speech. These desired outcomes are termed 'perlocutionary intentions' or the 'perlocutionary trajectory...' (pg. 198, emphases Johnson).

Chapter ten strives to present to the reader the complexity of human nature, once again describing the semiodiscursive essence of human life. Johnson helpfully reminds us that human nature is a very complex puzzle that has challenged not just psychologists and philosophers, but theologians as well. From a dualistic ontology, to strict materialism, to phenomenology, human nature has puzzled humanity.

Johnson identifies four orders of meaning with respect to human beings: the biological, psychosocial, ethical, and spiritual. Meaning, according to Johnson, “is all that is conveyed through some means of communication” (pg. 334). All of these orders consist of semiodiscursive meanings that are taken from the Word of God. In the first three orders, the relationship of the orders to Christ is only implicit, while in the fourth it is explicit. Furthermore, these orders can be rightly understood and interpreted only through the lens of the spiritual order. The goal for Christians is to develop a complex, comprehensive view of human beings for soul care.

Chapter eleven describes how these orders are related to one another and how they influence one another. Relations among these orders can be ontological or epistemological. Here, among many other good things, Johnson warns us against the error of religious dualism. “Religious dualists,” Johnson asserts, “focus on the highest order of human life—the spiritual—and see it as so much more important than the other orders of creation that the latter are neglected or seen as unworthy of serious attention, or, in the most extreme versions, are interpreted as being antithetical to the spiritual realm” (pg. 357, emphasis Johnson). Gnosticism is an example of this religious dualism gone awry. Johnson argues that Christian models of counseling that focus exclusively on God and sin and downplay biological and psychosocial influences run the danger of falling under the influence of Gnosticism.

God-glorifying soul care, Johnson asserts, can be exercised while working with all of the orders of human life, and one should prioritize one’s approach accordingly. Proper functioning at the lower orders does bring glory to God, but God’s glory is put on display in greater degree to the extent that his involvement is recognized by his creatures and made explicit. Johnson claims, “Drawing one another into praise is the movement of the manifestation of God’s glory. As a result of this doxological *telos*, proper functioning of brain and soul, if achieved in God’s name, intensifies the luminescence of the divine glory they put forth” (pg. 374, emphasis Johnson).

Part IV represents the last section of the book and everything that has come before should be seen as preparation for it. This section addresses what is at the center of soul care. This is the transformation of people as they understand more and more the glory of God. This is what Johnson calls “inwardness.” That glory is then expressed in the way one lives. This is what Johnson calls “outwardness.”

In chapter twelve Johnson revisits the topic of the Trinity and delves a little more deeply into some of the works of the Trinity in the growth of Christians. Here he lays out the importance of understanding God to be our Father, of union with Christ, and of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s growth. In closing this chapter, Johnson says this: “The Trinity is the center of Christian soul healing and maturity—by means of the Word and Spirit, the triune God is bringing his rebellious image bearers into his own glorious love and communion: the Father’s paternal affection, union with the Son of God and his work, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through a communal dialogue with believers, the Father, Son and Spirit are drawing them into increasing conformity to the likeness of Christ through faith—so that individually and corporately they might manifest the greatest divine glory possible” (pg. 413).

The topic of inwardness occupies chapters thirteen through sixteen. Johnson argues that the call to inwardness is a call which comes from the Scriptures themselves, both Old and New Testaments. Inwardness includes three aspects: self-examination, the identification and destruction of barriers to God’s glory, and the internalization of the signs of God’s glory. Johnson explores these aspects with skill and insight, devoting over one hundred pages to them.

Outwardness occupies only one chapter but focuses intensely on Christlikeness in the life of the believer. Inwardness cannot be the end of Christian soul care, according to Johnson. God desires his glory to be manifested, and that is done as humans reflect the glory of God by the way they live. As Johnson says, “Since believers have been raised with Christ (Eph 2:6; Col 3:1–4) and have become part of the new creation themselves (Gal 6:15), they too participate in and foster new creation glory. God has declared believers to be new selves (Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:9–10), so that, insofar as their new selves are realized in this age, they signify that a new era has dawned, a time in which God is receiving more of the glory due his name, from a growing proportion of his image-bearers on earth” (pg. 541).

Chapter eighteen ends the main body of the book by seeking to set forth the most important modalities that are to be used by soul care providers in helping those under their care. Johnson quickly surveys school of psychotherapy and suggests that the best way for Christians to appreciate and use contributions from these various schools is to boil them down to their most justifiable contributions, which Johnson describes as modalities. A modality, according to Johnson, “is a *God established means or pathway by which Christian soul care is facilitated*” (pg. 567, emphasis Johnson). “Legitimate counseling modalities,” Johnson states, “are those that address some significant dynamic structural feature (or set of features) of human nature, interpreted from the standpoints of the

Christian ground-motive (creation, fall, redemption, consummation)” (pg. 569). A metasytem of modalities, Johnson then goes on to argue, is the best approach by which to set forth a holistic framework for soul-care. The rest of the chapter outlines various modalities and how they can contribute to this framework.

Observations

Having set forth an admittedly lengthy summary of the book, this reviewer makes several observations.

First, Johnson’s book is *comprehensive in its scope*. As one reads *Foundations for Soul Care*, he cannot help but notice Johnson’s broad yet deep understanding of the disciplines of psychology, philosophy, and theology. The reference section of the book spans almost fifty pages and its content is every bit as impressive as its length. Those theologians that Reformed and Presbyterian folk value and trust fill these pages. Johnson also displays a depth of understanding of the Reformed faith that is unparalleled among Christian psychologists today, and his appreciation for the reformers is evident. Likewise, Johnson displays a knowledge and discernment of Christian and secular psychology and philosophy that is, quite frankly, encyclopedic. He shows a command in these disciplines that leads him to fair and balanced assessments of the strengths and the weaknesses of the various views represented in them. Many volumes of this size could be rightly accused of being long on argumentation, but short on substance. This most definitely is not the case with Johnson’s work.

Second, Johnson’s book is *complex in its argumentation*. This is the greatest strength, but also greatest challenge (and *potential* weakness) of the book. By complex, we mean carefully reasoned and argued. Johnson shows himself to be an academician of very high caliber as he expertly argues for Christian psychology as a *bone fide* discipline. He masterfully assesses what is needed to constitute such a discipline, measuring it against the standard by which scientific disciplines are accepted today. Johnson intricately weaves together his understanding of psychology and theology, and what each have to say about human nature, then brilliantly builds a Christian edification framework from this. Johnson does all of this while remaining unapologetic at the supreme place that the Scriptures are to hold in his proposal.

The complexity of Johnson’s argumentation, however, has the potential to be the greatest weakness of this book. This book is not for the faint of heart. The language and arguments found in *Foundations for Soul Care* are highly nuanced. This will, no doubt, make the book inaccessible to a substantial number of Christian soul care providers who, though interested in the topic of a Christian discipline of psychology, will simply not be able to assimilate the arguments set forth. The current reviewer confesses that even with an undergraduate

degree in psychology and a seminary degree in theology, there were substantial portions of the book that he needed to reread several times in order to assimilate the information. This can be a difficult task given the sheer length of Johnson’s volume. In order to offset this liability, Johnson may find it worthwhile to produce another volume that would be more accessible to Christian soul care providers who may not be able to assimilate easily the arguments presented in the larger volume. This is not to fault Johnson. His book is clearly an academic treatise meant for the academy. However, his arguments for a proper use of secularized psychology are so cogent and helpful, we fear they will never gain traction unless they are couched in terms that are a bit more accessible. This is not a call to dumb down, but a call to reach out to those who most desire a holistic approach to the care of those made in the image of God.

Third and most importantly, Johnson’s book is *corrective in its approach*. Since the birth of the BCM, the Christian church has been in a civil war. On the one side are those who claim that since psychology is a discipline that seeks to explain what ails mankind apart from God, it should not be utilized in any substantial way within the Christian counseling community. They stress the antithesis. The Bible, according to the most extreme versions of this movement, should be the sole and sufficient text for the Christian counselor in his quest to understand those he counsels.

On the other side are those practitioners who, while generally agreeing that the basic foundations of modern psychology and psychiatry are anti-theistic, believe that God does allow the non-Christian psychologist to grasp truth in his observation of God’s creation. They believe that since Christians have access to this truth, it would be a functional rejection of the image of God in man if we did not use it where it is to be found. A danger of this approach is an overemphasizing of common grace at the expense of the antithesis. This is the practice of what Johnson terms, “soft integrationism.” Johnson does not easily adopt catch phrases of much of the integration movement as he finds them to be vague and easily misunderstood. For example, in speaking about the declaration, “all truth is God’s truth,” Johnson argues that this must be qualified when interacting with secularized psychology so as not to fall into the error of accepting all that secularized psychology has to offer. He states that the phrase should be, “All truth is God’s truth, but not all texts express God’s truth” (pg. 101). Johnson admits this is not as catchy, but since not all assertions of modern psychology are true, it is necessary.

Johnson’s care in conceptualizing a Christian edification framework avoids the extremes of both the BCM and integrationist movements, providing a middle road in which special revelation is the controlling text, while common grace is given its proper due. In fact, since the Christian counseling wars

began, there has been no better treatment of how Christians can carefully use the insights of secularized psychology. This makes *Foundations for Soul Care* the most important book to come along in decades to help those who are serious about exploring how theology and psychology can be used to provide a holistic, edifying framework for use in Christian counseling circles. Simply to commend this book would not be enough. If one is serious about the idea of a discipline of Christian psychology, this book must be read. ■

Review: J.V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1–3 with the Christ of Eschatology* (Fearn Ross-Shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2007). 222 pages. ISBN 9781845502294. \$19.99 (paper). Review by Ryan McGraw, pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Conway, SC.

This is a very important book that helps bridge the gap between Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology. The original title of *Last Things First* was supposed to be *Protology* (11). Protology refers to the theological study of “beginnings” in light of Eschatology. The primary thesis of this book is that Protology and Eschatology should permeate and inform every *loci* of traditional Reformed Systematic Theology, in light of the parallels between Christ and Adam as rooted in Genesis 1–3 (38). J. V. Fesko’s books are always valuable and thought-provoking. This book has helped this reviewer to develop a more self-consciously eschatological approach to the reading of Scripture. It presents a refreshing defense of the classic Adam/Christ parallel in Reformed Federal Theology. However, there are several points at which its arguments could be strengthened and improved, and some points on which this reviewer cannot agree. The importance of the subject matter deserves detailed analysis. Therefore, after noting some general features of the book, this reviewer will examine each chapter individually.

General Remarks

After establishing the scope, purpose, and thesis of the book, Fesko divides his material into six chapters. These chapters address man as the image of God, “the Garden-Temple of Eden,” the Covenant of Works, shadows of the “Second Adam” in the first three chapters of the Bible, “the Work of the Second Adam,” and the eschatological significance of the Sabbath. Throughout the work, Fesko treats the data in Genesis 1–3 in light of the rest of the Bible, particularly the New Testament.

1. “Typology” is my own language rather than Dr. Fesko’s. My point is to emphasize some degree of (healthy) continuity with elements of what is called pre-critical exegesis.

2. In personal conversation with the author, I discovered that this was not his fault. The original manuscript of *Last Things First* was

He then draws the reader to view each topic in light of Jesus Christ as the eschatological Second Adam. The book is very well-organized, with a clear thesis statement and plan at the beginning of each chapter. This feature enables readers to follow the author’s arguments more easily.

This volume raises valuable questions. Protology is an important subject that is often neglected. Fesko states that he desires to “permanently alter” the traditional *loci* of Systematic Theology by including this subject (31). While many use Genesis 1–3 merely to address scientific or historical questions, Protology examines the text in light of theological questions. If we do not have a proper view of the significance of these early chapters of the Bible, then our view of the work of Christ shall be altered considerably. Protology is “embossed” across the pages of redemptive history (131). In contrast to many modern approaches to hermeneutics, Fesko seeks to recover a proper use of Biblical Theology, including sober typology.¹ Moreover, he paves the way for achieving greater harmony between the disciplines of Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology. This is greatly needed at a time when these two disciplines are often set in opposition to one another (see esp. pp. 10, 206). He employs a wide range of sources, including ancient, Reformational, and contemporary. He includes a very able defense of the Covenant of Works, contra authors such as John Murray (104–112). Finally, in light of recent discussions, he states clearly that under the Mosaic economy, Israel was under the Covenant of Grace (190).

Chapter by Chapter Analysis

Fesko’s material is important and it is worthy of careful analysis. Much of the criticism below does not reflect upon the conclusions or the theology of this book, but upon the details of the arguments. These criticisms should not be seen as detracting from its overall value.

Introduction

The introduction argues that Genesis 1–3 has been used improperly in scientific discussions of the origins of the universe. Consequently, the theological import of these chapters has been neglected. This chapter criticizes both the Princeton approach to creation as well as modern “creation science.” The reason is that both approaches have asked scientific questions rather than theological ones. Or, as in the case of Charles Hodge, ontological questions from Systematic Theology have been imported into Genesis 1–3 instead of treating the relationship between the first and Second Adams. In general, this criticism is valid, but the chapter suffers from a few limitations. First, at the end of the chapter, the book (as it is currently structured) leaves readers with the impression that the question regarding the length of the days of creation is irrelevant.² Princeton was wrong for trying to harmonize

Genesis 1 with evolutionary science, and “creation science” is off base for trying to harmonize science with its presupposed interpretation of Scripture. The reason is that Genesis is not about general history, but about redemptive history (27). While Fesko does not deny that the book of Genesis is historically accurate (26), his assertions are overstated. Fesko has identified a genuine problem, but he has swung the pendulum too far in the opposite direction. The publisher has (unintentionally) exaggerated this impression by cutting Fesko’s exegetical material on Genesis 1:1–26. Including the original material would have made this chapter sound less radical in its conclusions.

Second, Fesko’s historical analysis of recent debates over Genesis 1 is somewhat imbalanced. He argues that “creation science” is “antithetical” to Reformed hermeneutics (18) because its primary proponents—such as Henry Morris—have utilized a Dispensationalist hermeneutic (19). This is liable to the charge of the root or genetic fallacy in which one rejects a position on the basis of its source. Ironically, he defends other writers against charges of Neo-Orthodoxy in their views of creation by appealing to this very fallacy (28). Moreover, he treats the Princeton position as representative of nineteenth century American Presbyterian theology. This ignores the fact that the Southern Presbyterians in America generally rejected the findings of modern science in favor of literal twenty-four hour days. He cites R. L. Dabney (as cited by T. C. Johnson) for the proper relationship between science and exegesis (28–29). However, Dabney originally wrote his article on “Geology” in order to argue in favor of twenty-four hour days. Dabney based his arguments primarily upon the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture and the idea that all Scripture is profitable. If God’s people needed to wait thousands of years before gaining the scientific knowledge necessary to understand the days of creation, then that portion of Scripture was essentially useless to the Church prior to that point. In the *The Sensualistic Philosophy*, Dabney argued that the primary reason for rejecting Darwinism was that it was based upon pagan philosophical and theological grounds. This is important because Dabney at least offers a Reformed alternative to Fesko’s complaint concerning the hermeneutics of “creation science,” since similar conclusions have been obtained via a Reformed hermeneutic. However, Fesko’s warning against uncritical adoption of a movement that has often been rooted in Dispensational hermeneutics is well taken.

Chapter One—*Man in the Image of God*³

When Fesko treats the significance of the image of God, he argues that the primary seat of the image was dominion over the creatures (47). He does not deny that the image consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. However, he adds that his position on the image being seated in dominion “basically”

represents the history of the Reformed tradition (48). This is not nuanced enough to be historically accurate. For instance, seventeenth century Dutch theologian Herman Witsius argued that the image consisted “improperly” in the rational faculties of man, “properly” in righteousness and true holiness, and “consequently” in dominion of the creation. Dominion was regarded primarily as a result of creation in the image of God rather than the central part of the image itself. Whether or not this is biblical is a separate question, yet it is important to recognize that Witsius’ view was not atypical for Reformed Orthodoxy. Fesko cites Calvin to support his position, yet in the text cited, Calvin explicitly states that “the chief seat of the Divine image was in his mind and heart where it was eminent” (50). In addition, though he interacts with Karl Barth periodically, when he argues that both men and women bear the image of God, he does not mention Barth’s view that being male and female constituted part of the image. In light of contemporary discussions, this should at least receive some attention.

He next argues that our definition of the image of God in man is incomplete without reference to Christ, who both is the image of God and who restores that image in redeemed humanity (52). This is an important piece for building the Adam/Christ parallel in the gospel. However, statement such as “Christology defines Anthropology” and that Christ is the “true man” (52–53) have sometimes been developed in radically different directions. In historic Reformed theology, Christ was regarded as the image of God in a twofold sense. On the one hand, He represents true humanity as it was designed by God. On the other hand, as the eternal Son of God, He is the “express image” of God’s person (Heb. 1:3).⁴ In the first sense, Christ is a true man in the same sense as Adam. In the second sense, He is the unique revealer of the Godhead by virtue of His personal subsistence within the Godhead. When Fesko states that Adam and Christ are not the image of God “in the same manner” (52), we need to ask, “In what sense?” Barth regarded Christ as the essential image of God prior to the creation of Adam, so that man as the image of God was made in Christ. This has led some to accuse Barth of tacit universalism. Fesko’s conclusions are generally accurate, yet greater precision would strengthen his case further.

nearly twice the size and it included extensive exegetical sections as well as a treatment of the length of the days of creation. The material was cut due to an editorial decision.

3. The image of God is an awkward place to begin a work on Protology. Once again, this reflects the decision by the publisher to omit the exegetical material on Genesis one.

4. John Owen argued for both of these ideas as connected yet distinct concepts in his commentary on Heb. 1:3. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William Gould (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), XX, 89–91.

Chapter Two—The Garden-Temple of Eden

In this chapter, Fesko criticizes sharply authors such as John Murray for treating the continuing relevance of creation ordinances in the first two chapters of the Bible while neglecting the theological import of the Garden of Eden. This criticism is not entirely invalid, yet we get the impression that the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction. The introduction to this chapter begins with a false dichotomy, leaving readers with the impression either that they must regard Adam as “merely a farmer” in Eden, or as a priest who lived in communion with God (58–57). This is a “straw man” argument. Believers should adopt what Murray and others have written concerning the continuing relevance of creation ordinances. Simultaneously, they should view the Garden of Eden as a place of worship and communion with God. Moreover, it is questionable whether Murray neglects both of these emphases. His writings on the Sabbath and on the “Adamic Administration” indicate otherwise. Is it a fair criterion to judge his views by examining a book on Christian ethics in isolation from works in which he addressed different questions? Fesko has not denied explicitly the continuing validity of creation ordinances, yet he has marginalized their importance. He is right, however, in concluding that Adam’s primary functions in the Garden of Eden were “priestly rather than agricultural” (71).

Chapter Three—The Covenant of Works

This chapter contains a capable defense of the classic Reformed doctrine of the Covenant of Works. Fesko gives substantial exegetical evidence in favor of this covenant, including a useful exposition of Hosea 6:7 (69–90) and Romans 5:12–19 (91–92). He has interacted thoroughly with John Murray, who denied the “Covenant of Works” on the grounds that the term does not appear in Genesis 2–3, and that all divine-human covenants are based upon a gracious promise (104–112). The overall thrust of this chapter is that the Covenant of Works is essential to understanding the work of Jesus Christ as the Second Adam. This is a much needed corrective in light of contemporary discussions.

In spite of the tremendous usefulness of this chapter, some of its content suffers from a lack of precision. This is particularly true with regard to the creation covenant in relation to the Covenant of Works and the Noahic Covenant, as well as with respect to his treatment of merit in the Covenant of Works. With regard to the former, Fesko argues for the existence of a creation covenant on the basis of Jeremiah 33:20–21 (82). This covenant was made with the inanimate parts of the creation. Later he cites Genesis 6:18 (the covenant with Noah) as confirmation of a previously existing creation covenant

(88). Following Dumbrell, he argues that this covenant was constituted in Genesis 1:1. However, he argues that this creation covenant was made with Adam and that it is identical to the Covenant of Works: “If this analysis of Genesis 6:18 is correct, then it means that God established a covenant with Adam and that the covenant concept does not arrive *de novo* in God’s dealings with Noah” (88, 94–95). On page 95, he refers to the covenant with “day and night” as “unilateral,” whereas God’s covenants with man are always “bilateral” in some fashion. This distinguishes the covenant with day and night from the Covenant of Works. However, on page 113, he asserts that Genesis 1–3, Genesis 6:18, Jeremiah 33:20, and Hosea 6:7 all demonstrate that Adam was in a “covenant of works.” At first glance, this is an implicit assertion that the Covenant of Works was reaffirmed under or equated with the Noahic Covenant. In the next chapter, Fesko argues that the Covenant of Grace restores what was promised in the Covenant of Works through Christ as the Second Adam (139). This means that there are echoes of the promises given under the Covenant of Works in all subsequent covenants, without importing the idea of the Covenant of Works into them. In this manner, he tacitly reconciles the apparent difficulties involved in using the Noahic Covenant as a proof for the Covenant of Works. The intention in citing Genesis 6 and Jeremiah 33 seems to be simply to demonstrate that the notion of a covenant pre-dated Noah.⁵ In chapter 3, however, lack of precision on this point runs the risk of confusing readers. Additionally, he leaves several important questions unanswered, such as how a covenant made with the inanimate creation translates into a covenant made with Adam containing stipulations, promises, and threats.

Fesko’s discussion of merit in the Covenant of Works is historically deficient. While rightly affirming that the concept of merit within this covenant is necessary to understand the imputed merit of the Second Adam in the Covenant of Grace, he denies that Adam’s obedience was disproportionate to the promised reward (109). However, Reformed Orthodox theologians such as Francis Turretin argued that Adam would have merited the promise by covenantal merit. The idea was that the means of obtaining the promise was Adam’s obedience to the Law, while the promise that God gave to him was disproportionate to his obedience. The condition of the covenant was legal, but the promised reward was gracious. Fesko’s discussion gives the impression of being couched too strongly in terms of a choice between John Murray (grace without merit) and Meredith Kline (merit without grace). In other words, we must either affirm that God’s covenant promises are always in the context of the Covenant of Grace, or we must accept the idea that Adam’s merit was in exact proportion to the promised reward. However, to affirm that the promise of the Covenant of Works was gracious is not inconsistent with

5. In personal conversation, the author has confirmed that this interpretation is correct.

believing that the means of obtaining that promise was merit in a way of “justice.” A more robust historic approach would have presented readers with more options. This is helpful in answering proponents of Federal Vision Theology, who have appealed to classic Reformed Orthodox writers for proof of the gracious nature of the covenant between God and Adam. While these older authors affirmed a gracious element within the Covenant of Works, they did not do so in a manner that supports the positions for which they are often cited at the present day.

Chapter Four—Shadows and Types of the Second Adam

Here Fesko traces the work of Christ as the Second Adam through God’s covenantal dealings with His people in redemptive history. The basic argument is that there is a “theological reincarnation” of Adam at each stage of the Covenant of Grace (137). What this means is that all of God’s covenants with man relate to Protology, but that each stage of the Covenant of Grace looks forward to Christ as their fulfillment (142). This does not imply that the Covenant of Works was republished at every stage of the Covenant of Grace as much as that Christ would come to obtain the promises of the Covenant of Works for His people by means of the Covenant of Grace. This chapter simultaneously roots Covenant theology in Protology and in Eschatology.

Chapter Five—The Work of the Second Adam

This chapter sets forth the work of Christ in His offices of prophet, priest, and king (145). Christ’s work was to restore what humanity lost in the first Adam. New Testament Christology is rooted in Protology via the Adam/Christ relationship. Fesko includes an excellent defense of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to believers against the claims of the New Perspectives on Paul (158). By His work, Christ as the Second Adam restores dominion to man. Dominion is no longer a command in the Covenant of Grace, but it is a promise given to the Church as fulfilled by Christ (172). This serves as the basis for the Great Commission. The weakness of this chapter lies in the implicit undermining of creation ordinances. Fesko appears to present a dichotomy between accepting creation ordinances as a rule for human conduct and as a promised reward of the Covenant of Grace (172, 175). This chapter implicitly raises the question as to whether creation ordinances (i.e., marriage, labor, and the Sabbath) are binding upon those outside of the Church as well as within the Church. If they are not, then how can the Church denounce the breaking of them as sins among the unbelieving world? While not denying explicitly the validity of creation ordinances for ethics, Fesko unintentionally undermines them by criticizing too sharply those who use them for this purpose. It would have been sufficient simply to assert that creation

ordinances are relevant for ethical discussions, while stating that the present discussion is intended to fill a theological vacuum on this issue.

Chapter Six—The Sabbath

Last Things First concludes with the Sabbath as embodying the “eschatological goal” of redeemed humanity (184). The reason why the Sabbath was referred to as a sign of the covenant in the Old Testament was due to the fact that the weekly Sabbath pointed to the fact that God’s people would one day enter into God’s eternal rest through Jesus Christ. This is why working on the Sabbath was punished by death under the Law of Moses. Working on the Sabbath tramples upon the rest promised in the Covenant of Grace (195). Fesko argues that the day of the Sabbath has changed to the first day of the week (the Lord’s Day) under the New Testament in order to make the connection to the finished work of the resurrected Christ clearer. Sabbath keeping continues under the New Testament as God’s people look forward to entering into God’s eternal rest through Jesus Christ. This chapter is particularly valuable at a time when the Sabbath is neglected or attacked on a large scale.

Conclusion

In spite of the above criticisms, the more this reviewer has reflected upon this book, the more convinced he has become of its importance. *Last Things First* represents a significant step in the direction of harmonizing the methods of Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology. This volume stimulates thought with respect to reading the entire Bible in light of Protology and Eschatology. This leads to a more robust view of the Covenant of Grace in Reformed Theology. However, lack of precision at some points as well as inadequate interaction with the Reformed tradition illustrates an important point. As many contemporary authors strive after new methods for doing theology, it is wise to be rooted more strongly in the past. Contemporary discussions often cloud our thinking in modern theology and lead us to extremes. Read *Last Things First* with discretion and you shall read it profitably.■

Review: W. Gary Crampton, *From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism: A Critique of the Westminster Standards on the Subjects of Baptism* (Owensboro, KY: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2010). Paperback, 126 pages. ISBN 978-09802179-6-4. \$22. Reviewed by J. V. Fesko, Associate Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Westminster Seminary California.

The perennial debate between paedobaptists and credobaptists shows no signs of abatement, and Dr. Crampton’s book

is evidence of this trend. Crampton offers his book as a critique of the Westminster Standards' understanding of baptism, which focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on the question of whether infants are the proper recipients of baptism. In many ways Crampton's book is a helpful contribution to the debate because it sets forth a summary of Particular Baptist opposition to the Reformed position set forth in the Westminster Standards. But at the same time, the greatest strength of Crampton's book is also its greatest weakness. Crampton offers nothing new or helpful to advance the discussion. To illustrate this point, I once had a discussion with a young man who said he could not make up his mind on the question of infant baptism. He told me, "If I presuppose Baptist assumptions, I arrive at Baptist conclusions. If I presuppose Presbyterian assumptions, I arrive at Presbyterian conclusions." What the young man failed to consider was that all presuppositions are not created equal. Crampton's book never gets into the deeper presuppositional issues that divide Particular Baptists and the Reformed on this issue.

For example, one of the things that Crampton repeatedly emphasizes is that the subject of the debate must be determined on the basis of the New Testament alone. Crampton bases this presupposition on the fact that the Westminster Standards define baptism as a New Testament sacrament. Therefore, "It should be studied from a New Testament perspective" (18). Crampton's subsequent analysis focuses upon Christ's baptism, baptism in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. Such a New-Testament-only methodology is certainly commonplace, but what would advance the discussion is making a case for why this New-Testament-only approach is a proper presupposition. In the construction of doctrine, why is three-fourths of the canon of Scripture deemed irrelevant? Moreover, in the light of recent developments in the field of biblical studies, intra-canonical exegesis is all the rage. In other words, how do New Testament authors explain Old Testament texts when they allude to, echo, or cite them?¹

Crampton claims, "There is not a single example of infant baptism in the whole of Scripture" (4). Yet one text that Crampton does not treat is 1 Corinthians 10.1–4, a text which, if taken at face value, states that in some sense, infants were baptized into Moses, the cloud, and the Red Sea. This text represents a New Testament author citing and alluding to various Old Testament texts, but Crampton offers no exegesis of it. Another such text is 1 Peter 3.18–21, where the apostle

identifies the Noachic flood as a *typos* of baptism. These are only two texts, but important to note is that both of them have taproots that go back to the Old Testament and the earliest portions of Scripture, Genesis 6–9 and Exodus 14. In the apostle's explanation of baptism, Peter reaches back to Genesis 6–9, which means that anyone who seeks to explain baptism must do the same—we revisit the same ground as the apostles. To avoid this Old Testament terrain will undoubtedly affect the theological accuracy of the doctrine we formulate regardless of the subject.

First Corinthians 7.14 is an illustrative example of how the presuppositional role of the Old Testament can and should affect one's exposition of a text. Crampton's main objection to the Reformed appeal to this text is that Paul uses the same word "holy," "sanctified," (*hagios, hagiozo*) to characterize both the children and the unbelieving spouse of a Christian. Crampton follows what he believes is the logical outcome of the Reformed position: "So if the children should be baptized because they are holy, it would seem that the unbelieving spouses should be baptized as well" (73). What ensues in Crampton's analysis is not exegesis but rather the quotation of various commentaries that side with his own understanding of the text in question. Commentaries can and should be cited but they are no replacement for exegesis.

Crampton fails to account for the source of Paul's lexicon of theological terminology, one derived from the Old Testament. When Paul invokes the term *hagios* or *hagiozo*, one must not resort only to a Greek lexicon but ultimately to the Old Testament to see how these terms are used and in what context they appear. In particular, these words are covenantal cultic terms (e.g., Lev. 7:1, 6; 10:10; 11:44–45; 20:26; 21:7; 22:2–4). What should alert the reader that Paul has the covenant in view is the contrast between the two terms, *holy* and *unclean*. To be unclean meant a person was cut off from the covenant community (e.g., Lev. 13:46). If the Old Testament is Paul's theological backdrop, then one must ask the question, What happened to the Israelite who married a Gentile? What happened to children of a mixed Jew-Gentile marriage?

According to the narrative of Ezra, the men of Israel had married "foreign women" (i.e., Gentile unbelievers) and so they were required to "put away" both their wives *and* their children, and this was done "according to the Law" (Ezra 10:3; cf. 9:1–2). The term employed for "putting away" the women and children is not one that denotes divorce as the term is applied both to the women and children. To be certain, the action would most certainly constitute a divorce between the husband and wife in accordance with Deuteronomic law (cf. Deut. 24.1–4). But the one action would constitute an expulsion from the covenant community for both the spouse and the children. The same language of "putting away" (*ek-bale*) the spouse and child is used, for example, for Hagar and

1. See, e.g., G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson, eds., *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989); Craig A. Evans, ed., *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004).

Ishmael's expulsion from the fledgling covenant community of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21.10 LXX; cf. Gal 4.30). Under the Mosaic covenant the Gentile spouse contaminated the sanctity of the marriage and the children—both were unclean and the only way to remedy the problem was to divorce the spouse and cast both spouse and children outside the covenant community—they were both unclean. As one commentator explains Ezra's actions: "The marriage reforms must be seen as a purification of the community along priestly lines of separation from all that was unclean."² Under Old Testament law, Gentiles were prohibited from entering the holy assembly of the Lord down to the tenth generation (Deut. 23:3), and as is evident from Ezra's reforms, children of mixed marriages were also precluded.

When Paul gives his instruction in 1 Corinthians 7.14, these aforementioned texts undoubtedly lie beneath the surface. But what has changed is that Christ has come. Now that Christ has come the unbeliever, the "Gentile," no longer has the ability to render the marriage and children unclean. Instead, the believing spouse renders both the spouse and the children "holy." However, just as the spouse and the children under the Mosaic law were treated differently, the unbeliever divorced and cast out whereas the children were only cast out, so too Paul lays out different treatment for spouse and children. The believer is not required to divorce the unbeliever, and the marriage is therefore "holy."³ The unbeliever may remain in the realm where the gospel is revealed in word and deed (1 Cor. 7:16). The children, on the other hand, are not unclean, as they were in the Old Testament, but they are holy and therefore part of the covenant community and hence the rightful recipients of the sign of the covenant. The unbelieving spouse cannot be coerced to receive the sign of the covenant but must make a profession of faith.⁴ The children, conversely, do receive the sign because they are to be raised in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). While Baptists might disagree with such conclusions, if the debate is to move forward, they must engage in exegesis of both the Old and New Testaments.

Another example where presuppositions go unchecked occurs with Crampton's appeal to circumcision and baptism. Crampton only scratches the surface. Concerning circumcision, Crampton argues it "was a rite for the nation of Israel under the Old Testament administration. It was for the physical, male descendants of Abraham, and has no part in the New Covenant church" (25). Crampton makes much of the fact that circumcision is no longer practiced and that it was merely a "national mark" and "part of the Abrahamic covenant, which, among other things, gave them a right to their inheritance of the land of Canaan" (31). But Crampton never stops to ask the question, Why was circumcision a part of the Abraham covenant, a covenant that Paul identifies as the "gospel" (Gal. 3:7-9, 29)? Crampton does not consider the question, Why

did God give Israel circumcision? Of what significance is the severing of the foreskin? Was it simply a ritual? To his credit, Crampton acknowledges that there is spiritual significance to circumcision, but he argues that for Abraham *alone* it signified "salvation already received . . . it did not signify this to his male seed" (32). "Rather," argues Crampton, "to Abraham's male seed, circumcision presented the gospel message, namely, their need for a circumcised heart" (33).

Crampton does not address the presuppositional issue of how God's revelation, through word or signs (circumcision is identified as a sign, Gen 17.11), functions. Yes, the gospel is presented in circumcision as Crampton argues, but he does not explain how circumcision presented the gospel message to Abraham's male seed but not to Ishmael. In other words, Crampton fails to recognize the double-edged nature of God's revelation—that the gospel is the aroma of death and life (2 Cor. 2.15-16). Christ is both the rock of offense and salvation. Why is circumcision only a physical rite for Ishmael and a spiritual rite for Abraham's male seed? Rather, circumcision does indeed reveal the gospel and this gospel message was applied to the flesh of Israel's sons. They were never saved by this rite but rather by faith in the message that the sign proclaimed. Ironically, Crampton admits part of this truth in his statement that "circumcision presented the gospel message" but misses its full significance.

Of what import is circumcision? Briefly, the answer is that the seed of the woman, the male descendant, hence the circumcision of the male reproductive organ, would be cut off in a bloody covenant judgment. Just as the foreskin was cut off so the uncircumcised male was cut off from the covenant community (Gen. 17.14). The Jeremiah the prophet uses the same terminology to describe the covenant curse that would fall upon Christ (Jer. 11:19). Christ would be "cut off" from the land of the living in his crucifixion. It is this covenant curse language that explains why Paul calls Christ's crucifixion a circumcision (Col. 2.11-12), and it also provides the rationale for the connection between circumcision and baptism.

Crampton operates under the assumption that Reformed theologians have equated circumcision and baptism, though he does not cite any sources to prove his contention (27). But then what he takes away with one hand he gives with

2. Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Louisville: John Knox, 1992), 57.

3. Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, "Jewish Law on Illicit Marriage, The Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121/4 (2002): 718-21, 730.

4. Cf. Caroline Johnson Hodge, "Married to an Unbeliever: Households, Hierarchies, and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 7.12-16," *Harvard Theological Review* 103/1 (2010): 22. I am grateful to my pastor, Zach Keele, for bringing this essay as well as the essay in the footnote above to my attention.

the other when he states: “There is then an analogy between circumcision and baptism, but not an exact identity” (35). Crampton is correct but again does not dig deep enough. Crampton contends that baptism supersedes circumcision but he never explains why. He simply appeals to the idea of new creation, which is generally correct, but never expounds the specific significance of baptism. Why water? Is water imagery in Scripture only associated with the new creation?

In a word, circumcision gives way to baptism because the water points to the reality of the baptism of the Spirit. The seed of the woman has arrived, has been cut off, suffered the curse of the covenant, and has now poured out or baptized not merely the church but the whole creation in the Spirit (Joel 2:28–30; Acts 2:33). But once again, the Scriptures make clear that this baptism of the Spirit, what John the Baptist calls the baptism of “Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11), is not necessarily exclusively one of blessing. The baptism of the Spirit brings both curse and blessing. What is the determining factor as to whether a person receives baptism to his blessing or curse? The answer is, faith in Christ.

The biggest weakness of Crampton’s overall case is that it lacks a biblical-theological foundation. This lack of biblical theology is one of the reasons I have employed the term *Particular Baptist* to label Dr. Crampton’s position and *Reformed* to label the historic paedobaptist position. The Westminster Standards, one of the chief foci of Crampton’s work, inherently recognize the redemptive-historical character not only of God’s revelation but also of redemption itself. In simpler terms, Reformed theologians have argued for greater continuity between the testaments. On the other hand, Particular Baptists, although bearing many Reformed characteristics, have typically argued for greater discontinuity between the testaments. The aforementioned exegetical and biblical-theological points I have raised highlight these differences. For far too long the debate has focused upon theological conclusions rather than delving into the presuppositions. If greater attention can be given to a biblical theology of baptism, we are likely to see progress in this perennial debate.

RESPONSE TO DR. FESKO’S REVIEW OF *From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism: A Critique of the Westminster Standards on the Subjects of Baptism*. By W. G. Crampton.

First I would like to thank Mr. Chris Coldwell and Pastor Lane Keister for the privilege of being able to enter into this written “debate” with Dr. J. V. Fesko regarding the subjects of water baptism. I also want to thank Dr. Fesko for his willingness to debate with me. Then too, I would ask all of the readers of this debate to read, please, with an attitude expressed by the Bereans of Acts 17, who “searched the Scriptures daily

to find out whether these things were so.” Finally, as to the debate itself, Dr. Fesko has read my book *From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism: A Critique of the Westminster Standards on the Subjects of Baptism*, and made a number of comments which I address below.

On the first page of his critique, Dr. Fesko claims that I have added nothing new to the debate on the subject of infant baptism. I thank him for the compliment. The old paths are the best paths (Jeremiah 6:16). When we start adding “new” material to the old teachings we often end up in a form of “Neo” theology which is less than orthodox. I would counter Dr. Fesko by saying that he has added nothing to dissuade the overall concerns that Reformed Baptists have raised through the years regarding the subjects of water baptism. Dr. Fesko may think he has answered the problems faced by paedobaptists in supporting their view of the baptism of infants, but this is not the case. Over a number of years the present writer has had several very fine paedobaptist scholars (who will remain unnamed) admit (and commendably so) that they do not have answers to the various questions on this subject posed by credobaptists. I admire the candor of these men even though I do not understand why they continue to practice a doctrine that they admit they cannot defend.

Dr. Fesko begins and ends his review by referring to Reformed Baptists as “Particular Baptists,” believing that only paedobaptists are truly Reformed. Why? Because the paedobaptist position stresses the continuity of the Old Testament and New Testament and the credobaptists stress the discontinuities. Particular Baptists, he asserts, focus mainly on the discontinuity between the two testaments and show less concern for the continuities. Apparently, to be “Reformed” it is necessary to emphasize the continuities. In the opinion of this writer, this is inaccurate. I would remind Dr. Fesko that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *London Baptist Confession of 1689* are in 90% agreement regarding the doctrines of the Reformed Faith. To deny that Baptists who hold fast to the teachings of the *London Baptist Confession* are “Reformed” is to mock these two 17th century confessions. I, however, am convinced that Dr. Fesko is a gentleman and means no offense in this issue. The fact is, though, that Reformed Baptists do adhere to the continuity between Old and New Testaments. But they also see the discontinuity as per Isaiah 54:13 (cited by Jesus Christ in John 6:45); Jeremiah 31:31–34 (cited in Hebrews 8:8–12); Ezekiel 36:25–27 (referenced in Hebrews 10:22); etc., where we read that unlike the Old Covenant era, in the New Covenant “all shall know Me [God], from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Hebrews 8:11). The New Covenant is a “better covenant” established on “better promises” (Hebrews 6:6). These Old Testament passages (and others) clearly distinguish between the Old and New Testament eras, showing us that there is

discontinuity as well as continuity between the covenants that God has sovereignly established.

Dr. Fesko criticizes my book for a lack of “biblical theological” foundations. At the end of his review he writes: “[F]ar too long the debate [on credobaptism vs. paedobaptism] has focused upon theological conclusions rather than delving into the presuppositions. If greater attention can be given to a biblical theology of baptism, we are likely to see progress in this perennial debate” (above, 166). This is potentially dangerous language; at best it is uncareful. If Dr. Fesko is suggesting that we should subordinate the system of truth in the Bible to our biblical theological presuppositions, then this is dangerous. If he is merely suggesting that we need to focus more on presuppositions, then this is another matter, and I will address it at the end of my review.

I would say, however, that I do consider systematic theology more important than biblical theology. I believe it is imperative to do so. A focus on biblical theology without the shoring of systematic theology tends to lead to all kinds of “speculative” conclusions. The present writer is convinced that one of the problems in the church today is fostered by an overemphasis on biblical theology. One problem worthy of note is that when one’s biblical theology is given preference over the system of truth found in the Bible, one can speak of Pauline theology, Petrine theology, Johannine theology, etc., and, in so doing, give the impression that these men differ in the system of doctrine that underlies all such “theologies.” Systematic theology must be the queen and biblical theology the handmaiden in this matter.

This being said, I do indeed address the biblical theological underpinnings of the subject of water baptism in *From Paedobaptism to Credobaptism*, but never without the foundational fence of systematic theology. As I state in my book, a properly based teaching of biblical theology within its covenantal theological settings “demands disciple or confessor baptism, because it does justice to both the continuity and discontinuity of the covenant” (Crampton, 100).

On the first page of Dr. Fesko’s review he implies that I believe that the subjects of baptism must “be determined on the basis of the New Testament alone.” This is not so, and on page 19 of my book I refute this accusation. I maintain that the Old Testament teaching must be studied as well as the New, which I proceed to do in the book; but I conclude that since water baptism is a New Testament sacrament (as taught in the Bible and the Westminster Standards), the main focus must be on the teaching of the New Testament. This appears to be obvious, and patently so. It is evident that paedobaptists (properly) study the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper primarily from the New Testament perspective; why not the sacrament of baptism as well?

To expand on this subject, as noted, the *Westminster*

Confession correctly states that water baptism is a New Testament sacrament. Hence, it should be studied primarily from a New Testament perspective. This is how Westminster Standard paedobaptists approach their study of the New Covenant sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and rightly so. Even though we are taught in Exodus 12 that Old Testament Israelite children partook of the Passover ordinance (which foreshadowed the New Testament ordinance of the Lord’s Supper), we know from the teaching of the New Testament that participation in the Lord’s Supper is more restrictive. First, there is no positive or direct New Testament command to include infants or small children in this covenant feast. And second, in 1 Corinthians 11:27–32 there is the clear biblical mandate that one needs to examine himself prior to partaking of the sacrament, lest he eat and drink unworthily and bring judgment on himself.

Now if the New Testament regulation is sufficient to determine the participants of the New Covenant sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, why should it not also be sufficient to determine the recipients of the other New Covenant sacrament: water baptism? Again, this does not mean that we are not to bring the Old Testament teaching to bear on the subject. But it is an agreed-upon hermeneutical principle, as stated by the *Westminster Confession* (1:9), that “when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture... it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” The Augustinian dictum is also an accepted hermeneutic, that whereas “the New Testament is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed.” Both the Old and New Testaments are equally the Word of God, but the New Testament gives us greater insight into the teachings of the Old Testament, and reveals the gospel to us more fully than does the Old.¹ Thus, greater weight should be placed on the New Testament revelation, which “speaks more clearly.” And since Jesus Christ ordained baptism as a New Testament sacrament, the New Testament should be the primary determiner of the proper subjects of the ordinance of water baptism. What could be clearer?

Sadly, this is all too frequently not the practice of paedobaptists. B. B. Warfield, for example, wrote: “It is true that there is no express command to baptize infants in the New Testament, no express record of the baptism of infants, and no passages so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants were baptized.” This in itself should make one highly suspicious of the practice of infant baptism, especially

1. Paul teaches this in 2 Corinthians 3. It is also evident in Luke 9:28–36, in the account of the Jesus’ transfiguration. Here we read that Christ (representing the New Testament revelation) met with Moses and Elijah (respectively representing the law and the prophets, i.e., the Old Testament revelation). And Christ, we are told, outshines both Moses and Elijah. See also the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:5–6).

because, as we will see, the New Testament does command the baptism of professing believers, and it does record the baptism of such professing believers, thereby “stringently implying” that believers are the ones to receive the ordinance of water baptism. Undaunted, Warfield went on to say that “the warrant for infant baptism is not to be sought in the New Testament but in the Old Testament.”²

Louis Berkhof was of the same opinion: “It will be observed that all these statements [regarding infant baptism] are based on the commandment of God to circumcise the children of the covenant for in the last analysis that commandment is the ground of infant baptism.”³ John Calvin likewise retreated to the Old Testament to support infant baptism: “Since the Lord, immediately after the covenant was made with Abraham, ordered it to be sealed in infants by an outward sacrament, how can it be said that Christians are not to attest it in the present day, and seal it to their children [in baptism].”⁴

Warfield, Berkhof, and Calvin all seem to agree that there is not sufficient evidence to support infant baptism from the New Testament. This being so, they teach that we must go back into the Old Testament and begin with circumcision. The Westminster divines were of the same mind here when they cited Genesis 17 as their first footnote to support the *Westminster Confession’s* statement in 28:4: “but also infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.”

To take this a step further, if we are to determine the participants in the Lord’s Supper by means of the Old Testament, then we would be obligated to bring baptized children to the Supper as well as their baptized parents. This is what took place at the Passover feast, and should also take place at the Supper of the Lord. Thankfully, “orthodox” paedobaptists do not take this position.

Contrary to what Dr. Fesko states, in dealing with the subjects of water baptism I do address both 1 Peter 3:18–21 and 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 on pages 67–69 of my book. Further, I do interact with the Old Testament setting in both cases. There I point out that both of these passages speak of Old Testament “household baptisms.” But just as with the New Testament household baptisms, they are baptisms of redeemed households. In 1 Peter 3 and 1 Corinthians 10, however, the redemption is typological.

The first of these examples is Noah and his family. They were redeemed, not from sin, but from the flood. To use Peter’s

words, they were “saved through water” (1 Peter 3:20), thus typifying true salvation “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” expressed through water baptism (verse 21). Note is made here that in this passage, baptism is described as a response (*eperotema*) to the God of Scripture by the recipient of water baptism (verse 21). The one being baptized makes an “appeal” to God (NASB), or a “pledge” to God (NIV), or gives an “answer” (KJV, NKJV), “of a good conscience toward God,” to make that which water baptism symbolizes true in his life. Even though there is some question as to how *eperotema* should be translated, there is no question that all of the translations relate the fact that there is an active and spiritual response of the recipient of baptism. Such a response is not possible for an infant (or at least it is not possible to be expressed). As Richard Baxter reasoned, this text strongly supports confessor baptism. He wrote: “Baptism is said to save us, and therefore they that will be baptized must profess the qualification necessary to be saved.” And as written by Beasley-Murray: “We should be honest enough to recognize that 1 Peter 3:21 is one example of a New Testament baptismal utterance that cannot be applied to infant baptism. The baptism of an infant is neither his prayer to God for a pure conscience nor his promise to God to maintain such.”

It should also be noted, regarding the baptism of Noah and his family, that everyone involved was an adult (men and women), and they entered the ark based on God’s promise to them as a family. Each one understood the promise of God, and each one went on to the ark believing that God would keep His promise.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1–2, the second of the Old Testament household baptisms, the whole household of the nation of Israel was typologically “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” as the people left Egypt. As we read in Hebrews 11:29, “by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.” In the Exodus, a typologically redeemed nation was “baptized,” as Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:8; Exodus 20:1; Jude 5). So, too, in His cross work Jesus Christ was baptized (Mark 10:38) as He redeemed His elect people from bondage to sin in the greater Exodus (Luke 9:31).⁵

Moreover, if these verses are taken literally, thereby showing that infants were baptized along with the adults, then the following verse proves too much. As John Tombes argued, if 1 Corinthians 10:2 “proves that infants were baptized, the verse following [1 Corinthians 10:3] will prove that they received the Lord’s Supper.” The case would then be made for paedocommunion. It would also prove that the “mixed multitude” of unbelievers (Exodus 12:38) that left Egypt with the Israelites were also baptized, and that they too participated in the Lord’s Supper. Some paedobaptists believe that 1 Corinthians 11 qualifies 1 Corinthians 10:3. That is, in 1 Corinthians 11 the apostle clearly says that it is only those who are able to

2. B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 399.

3. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939, 1941), 638.

4. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), IV:15:6.

5. The word Luke uses in 9:31 is the Greek *exodos*, translated “decease” in the NKJV, and “departure” in the NASV.

examine themselves that are to be permitted to come to the Lord's Supper. This would, therefore, eliminate the thought of paedocommunion. But this is fallacious reasoning. First Corinthians 10:1–4 has to do with a symbolic Old Testament "household" water baptism and a symbolic Old Testament partaking of the Lord's Supper. The entire Israelite community is a typologically "redeemed" community, showing that this Old Testament example of the people of God partaking of the sacraments is the same as that of the New. The sacraments are for those who belong to the Lord.

It could also be argued that the baptism being found in these verses does not have to do with the infants at all. Paul may be speaking, not about infants, but about "fathers." If this is the case, then the fathers were the ones who were baptized and took the Lord's Supper (figuratively), and they are the ones who later apostatized, whereas the children were brought into the promised land (Numbers 14:26–33). Such an interpretation, even though less likely than the one mentioned in the paragraph above, would also be against infant baptism.

In his critique, Dr. Fesko somewhat expatiates on Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7:14, criticizing me for stressing the views of commentators rather than biblical exegesis. He is correct that I do not go into the details of the Old Testament background. My argument could likely have been strengthened if I had done so. But the reason I do not go there is because the text in its contextual setting has to do with marital relationships. The verse has nothing to do with water baptism. I cite three paedobaptist scholars to support my position. R. C. H. Lenski, B. B. Warfield, and Joachim Jeremias all deny that this verse has to do with water baptism (Crampton, 73–76). To see it otherwise is reading into the text what is not there. The reason I mention 1 Corinthians 7:14 in my book is because it is a favorite of paedobaptists.

In his review, Dr. Fesko cites a number of passages in Leviticus and Ezra to strengthen his claim regarding the importance of one being "clean" rather than "unclean" under the Old Testament economy (stressing the statements of four commentators, the very thing he accused me of doing above). He is correct in his analysis of these Old Testament passages. The problem with this work of exegesis on 1 Corinthians 7, however, as we have already said, is that the Pauline teaching does not reflect on water baptism at all.

Nevertheless, to argue in an *ad hominem* fashion, even if 1 Corinthians 7:14 may have some inkling of relevance to water baptism, the verse does not necessitate the baptism of an infant. As I point out in my book, the *hagios/hagizo* word usage applies equally to the infant and to the non-believing spouse (Crampton, 73–76). Should the New Testament church baptize a non-believing spouse simply because he or she is married to a believer? This is not good theology. Why then

should the verse necessitate the baptism of the infant? The entirety of the paedobaptism argument falls into the area of a *non sequitur*. Some paedobaptists argue that the covenantal nature of the family makes the holiness aspect of the family work differently in the case of infants versus adults. Parents answer for the holiness of their children whereas adults answer for their own holiness. This argument is very unconvincing. First, it would mean that in contradistinction to Ephesians 4:5, which states that there is only "one baptism," now there would be two kinds of baptism—one for children with the parents answering for them (which is foreign to every water baptism recorded in the New Testament), and one for those who make a pledge of a good conscience unto God when they are baptized (1 Peter 3:21). As a side note, Dr. Fesko has pointed out in his book that a number of Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) believed that immersion was the most appropriate mode of baptism, which does not properly apply to infants (the Greek Orthodox Church notwithstanding), hereby expressing (at least implicitly) another example of the two kinds of water baptism that would be necessitated by the paedobaptist viewpoint.⁶

As to Dr. Fesko's lengthy critique of my dealings with circumcision and its relationship with water baptism (above, 165–166), wherein I (allegedly) have not sufficiently dealt with the common ground between circumcision and water baptism, I acknowledge that I could have done more work in this area (see chapter 4 in my book). But I will note that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:5) itself teaches that circumcision is an Old Testament "ceremonial" rite which is no longer "ceremonially" relevant in the New Testament age. Since this is true, as is even taught by paedobaptists such as the Westminster divines, there should be little need to enter into a lengthy discussion of the nuances of circumcision.

Yet in these same pages Dr. Fesko gives us a taste of his biblical theological presuppositions. For example, he asks "of what import is circumcision?" Briefly, the answer is that "the seed of the woman, the male descendant, hence the circumcision of the male reproductive organ, would be cut off in a bloody covenant judgment. Just as the foreskin was cut off so the uncircumcised male was cut off from the covenant community (Genesis 17:14)." This is an interesting supposition, but this is all that it is: a supposition. The Bible does not say this. Hence, to elaborate on what the Bible does not say is not a worthy endeavor. It is mere conjecture. To use a New Testament example, to argue that there are infants in the households of those whose whole families are baptized is an argument from silence. The Bible does not say anything about this. This is pure supposition and unworthy of a claim

6. J. V. Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010).

of certainty. It is an argument from silence, and all arguments from silence are logical fallacies.

In contradistinction to what Dr. Fesko has said, however, the present writer does deal with the reason that God gave Israel circumcision. And it is not conjecture. The Bible teaches that circumcision was specifically given to Israel as a sign of her right to the promised land. That is what we read in Genesis 17. Further, I relate the circumcision of Colossians 2 to Christ's salvific work on the cross and show how this is in accordance with the prophecy of Ezekiel 40–48 and the restoration of the church under the New Covenant age. It is a prophecy that foretells the need for circumcised hearts for those who are to be in the New Testament community.

Moreover, I discuss how circumcision and water baptism relate to one another under the New Testament age, according to the Apostle Paul. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:11–13 and Philippians 3:3 that whereas all Israelite males in the Old Testament were circumcised regardless of their spiritual state, under the New Testament it is circumcision of the heart which is paramount.

Therefore, water baptism, says the apostle, is for those whose hearts are circumcised. This is about as clear a setting forth of credobaptism as one could expect. Who is it that is to receive water baptism according to the Apostle Paul? Those whose hearts have been circumcised—in other words, believers in Jesus Christ.

A paedobaptist might argue here that heart-circumcision is described as the substance of baptism itself, not as a prerequisite of baptism, thus highlighting the continuity of circumcision with baptism. But the New Testament refutes this in every incident of water baptism recorded. Further, in the Old Testament, every Israelite male was to be circumcised. In the New Testament, it is only those with circumcised hearts who are to be baptized.

As noted, in his review Dr. Fesko speaks of the need for more refined presuppositions when we come to this subject. He is careful to say that “all presuppositions are not created equal” (above, 164). He is correct in noting that our presuppositions can and do play an important role in our doctrine. But this writer's presuppositions about both continuity and discontinuity in the New Testament age are based on the teaching of the Old Testament prophecies mentioned above, such as Isaiah 54, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36. For this author to adopt new presuppositions about this element of biblical theology would necessitate a removal of these passages from the Old Testament. This writer's presuppositions are based on the teachings of the Word of God. They are not mere suppositions. Therefore, Dr. Fesko is correct to say that all presuppositions are not created equal. The paedobaptist presuppositions are without biblical foundation, and are inferior to the presuppositions of credobaptists.

SURREJOINDER TO DR. CRAMPTON'S RESPONSE.

In my surrejoinder to Dr. Crampton's rejoinder to my review, I offer three observations regarding the propriety of the term *Particular Baptist*, the importance of biblical theology for moving the debate forward, and the superiority of one's theological presuppositions.

First, regarding the proper name for adherents to the believer's-only position, Crampton takes umbrage at the fact that I label his position as *Particular Baptist*. My use of this term is in no way intended to “mock,” to use his words, the historic Particular Baptist creeds. The term *Particular Baptist* is simply the historically accurate label for Crampton's views.¹ By contrast, Reformed churches, identified as such by the historic Reformed confessions and catechisms, embrace both paedobaptism and believer's baptism. Popularly, one may refer to Particular Baptists as Reformed Baptists, but such a use of the adjective *reformed* is of recent origins. As an historical phenomenon, if the Reformation originated in the sixteenth century, then I would challenge Crampton to produce a sixteenth-century Reformed confession that advocated believer's-only baptism to justify his claim that his position is Reformed. I also employ this term to highlight the differences between the Particular Baptists and Reformed on the question of baptism. There are exegetical, hermeneutical, theological, and ecclesiological differences related to these points. Yes, Particular Baptists embrace many teachings of the Reformed faith, and for this I am grateful. I would rather have a Particular Baptist by my side promoting and preaching the gospel than an Evangelical Arminian. But this does not change the fact that Particular Baptists do not embrace the Reformed position on the biblical doctrine of infant baptism.

Second, regarding the importance of biblical theology, I am somewhat puzzled at Crampton's claim that to investigate biblical presuppositions can be “dangerous.” I agree with Crampton that systematic theology is the queen and biblical theology is the handmaiden in theology. However, my contention is that Crampton's book does not give much redemptive-historically conditioned exegesis (i.e., biblical theology) that supports and undergirds his systematic theological conclusions. For example, Crampton argues that the rules for the administration of the Lord's Supper should also govern the administration of baptism. That is, if a person must examine himself in order to take the supper, why should this rule not also apply to baptism? Such a conclusion may be possible and legitimate, but Crampton does not ask more fundamental questions that are regulated and informed by biblical theology such as, “What is the difference between covenant initiation and ratification?” “What are the rites that attend covenant initiation versus covenant ratification?” One can easily show the inadequacy of Crampton's argument by

making the case for repeated baptisms. If the Lord's Supper is frequently administered and received by the same person, then why not do the same for baptism? In a word, I still want to press my point: the Particular Baptist exegesis of the Old Testament as it relates to baptism and the Lord's Supper is insufficient.

Another illustration of this point comes with Crampton's rejection of my contention regarding the theological significance of circumcision. I argue that circumcision ultimately points to the cutting-off of the seed of the woman, the Messiah, in the bloody covenantal curse of the crucifixion. Crampton brushes this argument aside, not based upon exegesis, but simply upon the claim that the "Bible does not say this." He claims that my argument is "an interesting supposition, but that is all that it is: a supposition." Crampton received a copy of my book, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, for the purposes of facilitating this exchange. In my book I spend twenty pages setting forth the exegetical arguments to make my case. To brush away the exegesis as "supposition," further exposes his inherent aversion to biblical theology. This is why I have offered nearly sixty-five pages of biblical-theological exegesis as the penultimate step in constructing systematic theological arguments for a wholly-biblical understanding of baptism, more broadly, and infant baptism, more narrowly.

If the relationship between biblical and systematic theology can be illustrated in terms of a building (biblical theology) and the building inspector (systematic theology), then the inspector does determine whether the building is sound and inhabitable. In terms of Geerhardus Vos's explanation of the relationship between the two, systematic theology ensures that one's biblical theology logically coheres and is consistent in terms of the systematic arrangement of the parts to the whole.² My contention regarding Crampton's understanding of baptism is that the building inspector has nothing to inspect. There is no house—there are only a few isolated walls here and there, but no consistent structure. My challenge to explore presuppositions, therefore, is a call for Particular Baptists to build a biblical-theological house so that we can move forward in this debate. In other words, what does the Old Testament have to say about baptism?

Third, Crampton claims, "Paedobaptist presuppositions are without biblical foundation, and are inferior to the presuppositions of credobaptists." This very well may be true, but Crampton has not engaged specific elements of a number of the exegetical arguments. For example, he dismisses my offered explanation of 1 Corinthians 7:14 on the assumption that the passage "does not reflect on water baptism at all." Agreed. But the passage does not, as Crampton contends, merely deal with "marital relationships." It also deals with the covenantal status of children. The covenantal status of children is the more fundamental question when it comes to whether or not they

should be baptized. Are children in or out of the covenant? If children are out, then they cannot be holy as Paul teaches. If they are in, as I contend, then this is why Paul says they are holy. If they are in, then they should receive the sign of covenant initiation and be raised in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

These three observations, I hope, clear up a few things. For those who have doubts about the issues raised in this exchange, do obtain a copy of Dr. Crampton's book as well as my own, and then study the Scriptures, weigh the evidence, and decide for yourself. Be a good Berean. ■

Review: Douglas Bond, *The Mighty Weakness of John Knox* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2011). xxiii+151 pages, cloth. ISBN 9781567692556. \$16. D. M. Lloyd-Jones and Iain Murray, *John Knox and the Reformation* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2011). xii+130 pages, paperback. ISBN 9781848711143. \$11. Reviewed by Lane Keister, pastor of Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Winnsboro, South Carolina.

In keeping with the theme of this year's journal, I thought it might be helpful to give a review of these two books on John Knox, not only because they are very helpful books in and of themselves, but also because they provide a good entry-level overview of the Scottish Reformation. There are not very many introductory books on this subject. Concentrating on the central figure of John Knox, therefore, provides an easy and simple way of understanding the issues that the Scottish church faced.

These two books are quite different in their layout and focus. The book by Douglas Bond is more biographical in nature, while the Lloyd-Jones/Murray book is more purely historical. Furthermore, the Bond book has a more directly didactic purpose in mind (he calls it "a practical biography," xxi), whereas the Lloyd-Jones/Murray volume is more theological in tone. The two books complement each other nicely, and both can be read rather quickly. Both wish to portray Knox's life and ministry in a way that will benefit modern readers. In other words, neither book simply reads history. Both read history in order to make practical points for the church today. In the practical applications, Bond's book is more focused on individuals, whereas Lloyd-Jones/Murray is more corporate.

The Bond book's title is descriptive of Bond's thesis, that

1. See, e.g., James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 198ff.

2. Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980), 24.

the secret to Knox's power and success is his grace-reliant weakness (one is reminded here of 2 Corinthians 12:10). Bond's thesis ties in to his desire that modern Reformers would have the same "weakness." He writes:

The life of Knox, then, is not just for people who like shortbread and bagpipes, kilts and oatcakes. Neither is it just for Presbyterians or people whose names begin with Mac (or who wish they did). Knox is a model for the ordinary Christian, especially the one who feels his own weakness but who nevertheless wants to serve Christ in a troubled world. Knox is eminently relevant to all Christians who have ever been forced to come face to face with their own littleness (xx).

This thesis provokes Steven Lawson, the series editor, to exclaim, "To this day, Knox remains the greatest of all Scots" (xv). Whether this is true or not, most Scots have not seen him in this light. As Bond notes, "for the most part, Scotland has resented the life and ministry of Knox" (xix). Whether this is due to the natural intransigence and outright stubbornness of the Scots, or due to an inbred human dissatisfaction with calling such a weak-but-grace-induced man great (or a combination of the two), we do not know. This reviewer suspects it is actually the latter.

Bond proves his thesis in a number of ways. The reasons for Knox's weakness are not difficult to find. He was physically ill much of his life: "Like John Calvin, Knox would suffer throughout his life from kidney stones, insomnia, and other ailments" (10). Knox was not exactly known as a political Machiavelli, as his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* proves (see p. 18 for the effect this writing had on Knox's life).

Knox's strength in weakness was due in large part to his prayer life. Bond describes prayer as "a tacit admission that we are not capable in ourselves, that we are desperately needy, that the arm of flesh is weak and ineffectual" (39). Knox understood this very well. Bond describes this understanding of prayer in these words: "perhaps chief among Knox's God-given qualities was his sanctified understanding of his complete worthlessness unless he was on God's side, unless he was with God. Knox never saw himself as inducing God to be on his side" (34, emphasis original). Perhaps it is this understanding of prayer that resulted in his prayer life being among the most famous of any Christian who ever lived. Spurgeon said that "When John Knox went upstairs to plead with God for Scotland, it was the greatest event in Scottish history" (33). Mary, Queen of Scots, said that she was "more afraid of [Knox's] prayers than of an army of 10,000 men" (quoted on p. 39). Bond's own conclusion is that "Prayer was the engine that advanced Reformation in Scotland, and Knox was the foremost prayer warrior in the realm" (36).

Concerning Knox's theology, we get a few glimpses into his theological training, which was with John Calvin in Geneva ("Knox considered Calvin his spiritual father," 17). It is not surprising, therefore that Knox considered the preaching of the Word to be of paramount importance. He modeled his own preaching after that of Calvin. Here again, however, we find Bond's thesis helpful, since "he believed that the power of a preacher comes not from inherent gifting, studied eloquence, or academic learning (Knox never completed his university studies). It comes, he was convinced, from divine anointing" (50). The power came from God, not from innate talent, or even study (as valuable as study was for him, as his sojourn in Geneva amply shows).

In Knox's writings, we find a fairly heavy emphasis on the doctrine of predestination (80). This was not because he thought of predestination as a central dogma (contrary to some evaluations), but because "it was the theological rebar in the doctrinal foundation on which alone his flock could stand with unshakable confidence in the sole sufficiency of Christ" (82). Further, unlike many Calvinists, he "never wielded predestination as a club; he tenderly uncoiled it as a lifeline for the foundering lost" (87).

One final point this reviewer would like to make concerns the evidence of Knox's character. His "weakness" was evident in his fear of God alone. We often think of Knox as the thundering preacher against Mary, Queen of Scots. He had power, yes, but it was never his own power. Bond, quoting Tyler's history of Scotland, remarks that "on no one occasion do we find him influenced by selfish or venal motives. In this respect he stands alone, and pre-eminent over all men" (22). This character trait was present because of his fear of God, a fear which also prompted him to be unmoved by any human reaction to him or his ministry (22). This book is not only a helpful introduction to the man, therefore, but also a rousing encouraging devotional book. Bond has convincingly proven his thesis, in this reviewer's mind.

The volume by Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Iain Murray is a collection of two previously published essays by Lloyd-Jones, and one newly published essay by Iain Murray. The first essay by Lloyd-Jones is a more general reflection on the Reformation. The second essay, also by Lloyd-Jones has as its thesis that John Knox was the founder of Puritanism. The third essay, by Murray, is a biographical essay on John Knox's life.

The first essay by Lloyd-Jones has some good points, and one bad point. He rightly argues that "you simply cannot understand the history of Scotland unless you know something about the Protestant Reformation" (9). One of the key points about the Reformation that he wishes to point out, is "the way in which they (the Reformers, LK) kept on discovering that they had been rediscovering what Augustine had

Continued on Page 251.

neglects the modal status of both the granted premise and the theistic conclusion. The overall conclusion of our discussion is that a transcendental argument intended to establish the necessity of God's existence must be *purely* transcendental²¹—i.e., it must be composed *exclusively* of necessary truths.■²²

Review: Douglas Bond, *The Mighty Weakness of John Knox*. D.M. Lloyd-Jones and Iain Murray, *John Knox and the Reformation*. Continued from Page 212

already discovered, and which had been forgotten" (13). This is a salutary point in today's church, where many people seem to think that church history started in 1517.

The bad point is a small indication that Lloyd-Jones was influenced by R.T. Kendall's "Calvin versus the Calvinists" school. He lambastes the "scholastic philosophy" of the Medieval period (pp. 18–19), as if the term "scholastic" indicated the content of what was taught rather than the method (Richard Muller, in particular, has been helpful in making the point that "scholasticism" refers to a method of teaching, not the content of what is taught).

The second essay is a bit more helpful, in this reviewer's opinion. He praises John Knox's "sense of discrimination" (42), a quality that we usually refer to today as "discernment." He argues that this quality was one of the most outstanding features of his life, alongside "shrewdness" (43), "wisdom" (44), and "moderation" (45). This last characteristic sounds pretty silly when talking about John Knox, a man not precisely known for moderating his tone. However, there are some examples of moderation in Knox's life that show that he could be moderate sometimes. This reviewer would have appreciated a few more examples to counter-balance the evidence for the opposite position taken by many historians.

In getting to the thesis itself, he argues that originality as a character trait was one of the hallmarks of both Knox and the Puritans (52). Furthermore, the principle that the Scriptures have the supreme authority in our lives is also one the Puritans upheld (although it can certainly be argued that all the Reformers did this). The third piece of evidence he adduces is that Knox put into practice his principles (55–56), surely a characteristic of the Puritans, if there ever was one.

One last fascinating historical point that Lloyd-Jones explains is the origin of the so-called "Black rubric," a sheet of paper added to the Book of Common Prayer by Cranmer, but, as Lloyd-Jones argues, forced to do so by John Knox (pp. 58–63). This sheet of paper had a warning in it designed to be a compromise between the Anglicans and the Puritans concerning kneeling during the Lord's Supper. The rubric explains that such kneeling has nothing to do with adoration or worship of the elements or anything else. Lloyd-Jones's conclusion concerning the Black Rubric is that "Here is proof positive that this man was the leader of the Puritan party in this explicit manner" (63).

Murray's essay is purely biographical, in order to complement Lloyd-Jones's more thesis-oriented essays. It is entitled "John Knox and 'The Battle.'" Murray desires to point out how controversial a figure Knox was (83). After a helpful and orderly marching through the key events in Knox's life, Murray ends with a section entitled "What We May Learn from Knox" (pp. 114ff). The first helpful point he makes here is that we have an advantage that Knox never had. He had to fight against every tradition, because almost every tradition in the church was bad. We, however, have many good traditions which we do not have to jettison. The second helpful point is that Knox engaged in a very extensive ministry of encouragement (120). Knox used key doctrines like election to encourage people (see the same point made above concerning the Bond book). The third point he makes is about the power of preaching. In an age where digital media are constantly threatening to make preaching obsolete, we must never lose faith in the God of the Word, who has promised us that His Word will never return to us void. This reviewer does recommend this book also as a helpful analysis of several key issues in play during the time of the Scottish Reformation. It is a great place to get one's feet wet in Scottish church history, which has Knox for its main fountainhead.

Psallo. Psalm 116:1–9. Continued from Page 213.

Solomon, it speaks prophetically of Christ and His eternal reign. "God save the King" applies most assuredly to Christ as the King of Israel forever, and hearing the proclamation of the Psalmist in 72.15 "and he shall live!" gives great comfort to us in that we know that our King reigns by the power of an endless life.

Finally, as we meditate upon Psalm 116 let us see our Lord prophetically represented as that public Person whose deliverance from death brings joy and salvation to His people. Let us remember that the Father always hears Him (v. 2, cf. John 11:42). In His being brought low, and in His exaltation, (v 6–8) our salvation is accomplished. In His taking the cup of salvation (v. 13, cf. Matthew 26:27), and in keeping His covenant bond with the Father (v. 18, cf. Titus 1:2), our King takes our sins to Himself, and provides for us a righteousness not our own. As He calls us to Jerusalem for the great feast (vv. 18–19), so we are gathered to Him. And as He lives, so shall we live also (v. 19, cf. John 14:19).

TODD L. RUDELL ■

21. On the basis of my work in the present paper, I have articulated three different argument patterns for theistic arguments (see my forthcoming "Rejoinder to Anderson" for my best formulation of these). The Modal Transcendental Argument Form is logically equivalent to a pattern III theistic argument where all premises are necessary truths.

22. I thank Bill Evans and John Wingard for helpful conversations and comments concerning this paper.