

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

Book Review: Franciscus Junius, *The Mosaic Polity*. Sources in Early Modern Economics, Ethics, and Law Series. Translated by Todd M. Reſter. Edited by Andrew M. McGinnis. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian’s Library Press/Acton Institute, 2015. Paperback. 216 pp. ISBN 9781942503101. Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Waddington, Ph.D.

One of the many fruits following from the Muller revolution in historical theological studies is the translation of many works that have until recently laid in obscurity on duſty shelves in auſt libraries across Europe and around the world. Among theſe fresh translations are works by the seminal French Reformed ſcholaſtic Franciscus Junius (1545–1602). David Noe of Calvin College has offered us a fine edition of Junius’ *Treatiſe on True Theology* which introduced, among other things, the archetype/ectype diſtinction into the bloodſtream of Reformed theology. More recently prolific translator Todd Reſter has made available Junius’ *Mosaic Polity*. This is a moſt fascinating read as it addreſſes iſſues ſtill in diſpute in the Reformed church involving theonomy, two kingdoms, and eſta bliſhmentarian ſchools of thought.

Following an introduction to the ſeries in which this title is included (vii–xvii), Reſter and editor Andrew McGinnis provide a helpful biographical ſketch of Junius and overall elucidation of the work (xix–l). Junius himſelf begins his work with a lengthy preface to the States General of Holland (3–27) in which he explains the rationale for the book. Junius diſcuſſes the value of ſecular law but points out that the Laws given by God through Moſes poſſeſs a ſublimity that ſurpaſſes mere human law. But there is more to that matter than this. Which is why he has penned this little treatiſe on Mosaic polity.

Before providing an expoſition of the place of the Law of Moſes in the conſtruction and formulation of contemporary laws among Chriſtian nations Junius provides a table of thirty-eight theſes which will provide the ſkeleton on which he will

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place fleſh in his expoſition (29–36). Theſe theſes delineate the kinds of law that exiſt (i.e., divine or human or to uſe expoſitions found in Junius’ *Treatiſe on True Theology*, “archetypal” and “ectypal” law) and then the diſviſions of human law (ſuch as natural law and particular laws).

Chapter one deals with the “correct definition and diſviſion of the law” (37–57). Junius commences this chapter with a brief diſcuſſion of how law has been recognized to be hugely ſignificant in the ordering of juſt ſocieties and how the coming of Jeſus Chriſt has introduced grace to further correct and elucidate law. There are laws that addreſſe life in general ſociety and laws that addreſſe life in the church. As Junius puts it, “For to the extent that we may be Chriſtians, we do not ceaſe being humans, but we are Chriſtian human beings. So alſo we muſt ſtate that therefore we are bound by Chriſtian laws, not that we are conſequentially released from human ones. For grace perfects nature; grace does not, however, aboliſh it. And therefore with reſpect to the laws by which nature is itſelf ſuſtained and renewed, grace reſtores thoſe that have been loſt, renews thoſe that have been corrupted, and teaches thoſe that are unknown” (38).

Law is differentiated into either eternal or temporal. Law that is formulated in time is either natural law or that which attaches to nature. Natural law is innate and involves “common notions” or “principles and conſluſions adumbrating the eternal law by a certain participation” (theſis three, 44). Divine law is “infuſed in rational creatures and informs them with common and individual notions beyond nature...” (theſis ſix, 49). Human law is that “which humans, proceeding by reaſon, produce from the preceding laws” ſuited to them according to “common juſt, honeſt, uſeful, and neceſſary conſluſions, then to particular determinations for the condition of perſons for whoſe good it is produced, the things or matters concerning which it is produced, and for the circumſtances which occur to them” (theſis ſeven, 54). The important thing to note here are three factors involved in theſe human laws: perſons, things or matters, and circumſtances. The relation of theſe to each other involves “juſt proportion” and ſo can and often do change.

Junius in the ſecond chapter deals with the general ſubſtance of the Law of Moſes (59–70). Junius ſpecifically delineates what he means by the law of Moſes, “theſe things that pertain to that moral ordering of reaſon, which we have previously outlined, and not the narration comprehended in thoſe books of matters done or the narration of promiſes” (59). More to the point, the laws of Moſes are a “perfect example of thoſe laws...made according to the pattern of the eternal, natural, divine, and human law” (60). That the laws of Moſes reflect the eternal can be demonstrated by the fact that they reflect the combination of the natural, divine, and human laws. The laws of Moſes reflect the natural law which was alſo exiſted in the perſons of Adam and Eve in uncorrupted form

and now since the fall in corrupted form. As Junius points out, this form has been purified in the laws of Moses. The law of Moses reflects divine law in that it is perfect and given to the church supernaturally through types and ceremonies. This law was then later confirmed by Christ (62). The law of Moses also reflects human law in that it was accommodated to “human and political conditions.” Given that the law of Moses reflects human as well as divine and natural law as well as the eternal, Junius argues that “all these laws have an immutable part and a mutable one” (thesis twelve, 69). Junius therefore suggests that the Mosaic legislation has a part that is divine and immutable and a part that is human and mutable.

In chapter three, Junius considers the immutable or unchangeable part of the judicial laws of Moses and other human laws (71–85). Junius points out that whatever part of human laws or the laws of Moses that reflect the eternal reason is for that reason immutable (71). This immutable part is so because it reflects the eternal reason of God, is shadowed forth by God in nature, and is expressed by him in his word (73). The immutable part of a law can be ascertained by its origin, object, and end (thesis fourteen, 74).

Chapter four deals with the mutable or changeable part of a human law as well as the causes of the said changes (87–96). Junius notes that the immutable part of a law always obligates whereas the mutable part obligates “according to the persons, matters, and circumstances of those who live under them” (87). Human laws may change for two basic reasons: because the person who made them according to reason may determine in the light of eternal reason that it ought to change (thesis twenty, 90) and laws may change because the circumstances the laws are meant to govern may change (thesis twenty-one, 95–96).

Junius deals with the mutable or changeable aspect of the law of Moses “specifically” in chapter five (97–111). According to thesis twenty-two, the “specific determinations in the law of Moses are mutable, to which one proceeds from unmoved principles and common conclusions according to the mode and condition of those matters subject to the regulation of the laws” (98). That is, specific applications of general principles are changeable.

In chapter six Junius discusses the changeable aspect of the general right in the Mosaic law (113–123). That which Moses addressed to Jews as humans is called the general right and that which addressed them as partakers of God’s grace as the church is called the particular right. Junius is concerned in this chapter with the mutable part of the law of Moses that addressed Jews as humans. That part can change which involves the persons, matters, or circumstances of the law addressed to Jews considered as human beings.

Chapter seven deals with what is mutable in the particular right or has in fact changed (125–136). Junius is concerned here

with those aspects of the law of Moses pertaining to the Jews as recipients of God’s grace in his church. Specifically “whatever laws have a particular law, having been set forth in rites and ceremonies, were all mutable. Now the majority of these have changed, not only in the circumstances, but also in the thing itself, especially whatever laws were established according to the shadow of things to come” (thesis thirty-one, 125).

Chapter eight addresses what is mutable or changeable in the mixed laws of Moses (137–164). Junius notes something interesting about the tripartite distinction of the laws of Moses: the laws typically do not represent a single kind or classification. That is, the laws of Moses are predominantly mixed. They share characteristics of the moral, civil/judicial, or ceremonial classifications (thesis thirty-five, 137). Thesis thirty-six specifically states, “Among these that are of a mixed kind, what is moral remains, what is judicial is absolutely changed according to the circumstances, and what is ceremonial universally perishes” (140). Junius discusses three biblical examples at length in the remainder of chapter, offering guides for how to handle other examples.

It should be clear from this review that Junius, like his other Reformed scholastic colleagues, was not afraid to borrow from either the Greco-Roman philosophical and rhetorical tradition or where useful the medieval Roman Catholic scholastic tradition as well. It is not immediately obvious that Junius was ignorant of what he was doing. Did Junius know that he needed to “plunder the Egyptians” with biblical care (see Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine*)? Did he know that he needed to untwist twisted truth (to use Scott Oliphint’s language in *The Battle Belongs to the Lord*)? That he should be doing that ought to be obvious. That he was *not* doing it would need to be demonstrated. One does not have to spell out one’s methodology every time one does theology. Junius evinces the typical philosophical eclecticism of the Reformed scholastics. He does not appear to be enslaved to anyone philosophical school. If that is so, then he is arguably operating with a standard which from various and sundry comments made throughout the book would be a biblical one.

It is also clear from statements made in the book that Junius understood that the role of the magistrate is to enforce the first and second tables of the Law of Moses. Both tables are written on the human heart (per Romans 2) and so are reflected in both divine law and natural law. Since these are revealed in the Mosaic law, Junius would argue that the magistrate’s enforcement of the first and second table of the Law is a factor of eternal, divine, natural, and human law. Conversely, it is appropriate for the church (and her theologians) to speak to the magistrate when requested or when God’s law is contradicted or contravened.

We might say that Junius held to something like a mutually overlapping magisterium. That is, Junius evidences a form of

the two kingdoms doctrine. That is, the magistrate had jurisdiction over Christians as humans. Matters pertaining to this world (politics, etc) were the domain of the magistrate and insofar as the church was made up of human beings, albeit Christian human beings, she was answerable to the governing authorities in the state. At the same time, the church and her officers were responsible for the spiritual realm. This means that ministers and elders had oversight of the spiritual care of magistrates (and all other peoples, of course). In other words, in cases of spiritual concern, magistrates were subject to the authority of the church. Franciscus Junius was an establishmentarian. That is, he was neither what we would call theonomist, nor was he radical two kingdoms theoretician. Because he recognized that there were mutable as well immutable aspects to the law of Moses as well as the tripartite distinction within the law of Moses, and had a clear sense of redemptive historical progress he cannot rightly be classified as a theonomist. Because Junius expected the magistrate to enforce both tables of the law he does not fit neatly into the radical two kingdoms box either. This enforcement of the two tables of the law also involved the magistrate punishing heresy and error as well as looking out for the peace and purity of the Reformed church. Junius predates the kind of denominationalism we have grown accustomed to here in the United States.

The other matter of interest is Junius' clear headed understanding of the tripartite division of the law of Moses. While he follows the division of moral, judicial, and ceremonial, he is fully cognizant of the fact that the majority of the laws of Moses partake of more than one category. Typically in our day biblical scholars criticize the division as artificial and often say that no Jew would slice and dice the law the way Christians do. Of course that is the point, isn't it? The division is the result of the coming of Christ as the culmination of progressive redemptive history. With the coming of Christ and the clear setting aside of some aspects of the Mosaic law and the carrying forward of other aspects, something like the tripartite division is necessary for the Christian to properly handle and benefit from the Law. Of course Junius would probably argue that the tripartite division is not merely a reader response but actually reflects something true about the substance of the Law itself. Junius, of course, is aware of the complexity of the matter. And that very complexity enters into his consideration of the changeable parts of the Mosaic Law.

My sense is that Franciscus Junius is a theologian we need to become reacquainted with. I guess I will now have to dig out my copy of Abraham Kuypers' edited edition of Junius' *Works*. I will have to slug my way through the Latin prose until those like Todd Rester see fit to translate the rest of his literary corpus. While it would probably be ridiculous to try to reprint Junius, his work can be critically appropriated. We can learn from Junius' precision and depth of analysis and

translate the technical scholastic terminology into something more understandable for today. This is a book that needs to be read by anyone and everyone interested in a Christian understanding of the Mosaic economy. ■

Book Review: Gerald Bray, *God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014. Hardcover. 1,264 pp. ISBN 9781433526947. Reviewed by Carl R. Trueman, Ph.D.

In the nineteenth century, it was John Henry Newman who wrote the classic work on the subject of doctrinal development, and the fact that his essay on development was an important part of his own move to Rome left the concept under deep suspicion in conservative Protestant quarters. Recent decades have made conservative Protestants more aware of the issue of doctrinal development than previously. In addition, the inherently relativizing effect of Hegel's understanding of intellectual history was scarcely likely to appeal to those who wished to preserve the faith once delivered to the saints. Whether one was with Newman or the Hegelians, development looked like a convenient way of justifying changes in Christian teaching of which one approved.

Yet conservative Protestants today are more sensitive to the fact that matters such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, as formulated in the categories of Nicea/Constantinople and Ephesus/Chalcedon do not simply fall from the verses of Scripture into their laps. Doctrine, or at least the conceptual language and logic of doctrine, does develop over time. Paul does not speak of *hypostasis* and *ousia* as does Gregory Nazianzus. Yet few if any thoughtful Christians would wish to argue that this fact indicates a problematic subversion of Paul's thinking on the part of the Cappadocian father.

In light of this, Gerald Bray's *God Has Spoken* offers Christians an excellent guidebook on the history of theology, aka the development of doctrine. Bray writes as a conservative evangelical Anglican with a deep appreciation for the gospel, but he also writes as a Christian with a clear understanding of the catholicity of the Christian faith. Early on in the book he comments that no Christian can now write a history of doctrine which assumes that their own denomination in the present has an absolute monopoly on Christian truth. The point is well made: despite the tendency of individual denominational histories to portray their subjects as the meaning of church history, all orthodox Christians inevitably draw upon concepts and resources which transcend their local boundaries.

The question then becomes: how do we learn about the wider Christian tradition? And the answer is in part: by reading books like this. Bray has an enviably comprehensive grasp of Christian history and a lucid writing style which

makes even complex ideas relatively easy to grasp. He is also not averse to throwing the occasional punch or witty barb. Learned, well-written and sardonic are words rarely applied with appropriateness to a single theological work.

The work is not a straightforward chronological history of doctrine. Given the vastness of the topic, structure is critical. Bray opts for a broadly Trinitarian approach. This has a number of advantages. First, as noted above, the Trinity is a doctrine which even the most ardent Bibliclist would have to acknowledge is not found in its linguistically developed form in the Bible. Second, it is something in which all Christians, broadly considered, have an interest. To engage thoughtfully with the faith, one must at some level engage thoughtfully with the Trinity. Third, the doctrine offers a helpful framework for engaging the full sweep of the faith, given that both creation and salvation are rooted in God's Trinitarian nature.

Thus, the primary structure of the work moves from an historical discussion of the Jewish background through the debate about Father, Son and Holy Spirit as it developed in the first five centuries. This allows Bray to trace out some of the inner logic of creedal discussions. One vital point that is often missed by a more Bibliclist attempt to justify all doctrinal formulations as the direct result of biblical exegesis is that resolutions on one doctrinal point introduce new language and logic which inevitably shapes future discussion. The classic example of this is the notion that Christ has two wills, divine and human, a point which is surely at first glance counterintuitive to most Christians. Yet, as Bray clearly demonstrates, the theology of the Tome of Leo and then of Chalcedon ultimately requires the two-will resolution, as demonstrated by the arguments of Maximus the Confessor.

While focused on patristic testimony and broadly chronological in structure, Bray's individual sections on each Person are not exclusively so. When he deals, for example, with the Son he also adds discussion of later debates about atonement. When he focuses on the Spirit, he also addresses that most Protestant theological distinctive, assurance. Such an approach runs the risk of sacrificing the overall historical narrative to doctrinal synthesis, but Bray manages to avoid this pitfall.

The final section offers an overall account of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. This is an interesting move. Having already elaborated the development of Trinitarianism over nearly a thousand pages, Bray might be forgiven for assuming that he had completed his stated task. Nevertheless, this last section does add to the overall usefulness of the narrative, given an account of how the doctrine of God came under strain over the centuries and how different traditions responded.

In this section, I did find the account of Aquinas as developing a philosophical account of God to be somewhat overlaid. Much of the more recent scholarship on Thomas

has emphasized the importance to his thinking on biblical exegesis and the writings of Augustine. In addition, it has become clear over recent decades that the reception of Thomas's thought in later Roman Catholic tradition fundamentally altered his thinking on some important points. I am indeed not convinced me that the Angelic Doctor was quite as much in thrall to philosophy as Bray argues.

In this last section, Bray's most signal contribution is his commentary on the rise in popularity, both among theologians and Christians in general of the idea of God as suffering—the passibility/impassibility issue. At the risk of a bad pun, Bray gives a sympathetic account of the revisionists' motives while taking care to distance himself from them. There seems little doubt as to where Bray's own position lies on this; but, at the risk of seeming pedantic, he might perhaps have pressed that more forcibly. His assertion that this is the main issue which theology needs to address and to do so in a manner which respects established tradition, is both prophetic and profound. Deviations from the doctrine of God, as much if not more than the doctrine of Scripture, have proved to be as dangerous for long-term orthodoxy in the church as anything.

Overall, this is a very fine volume which will provide the thoughtful pastor an excellent, thorough overview of the history and doctrinal dynamics of the Christian faith. ■

Book Review: Mees te Velde, et al., *Correctly Handling the Word of Truth: Reformed Hermeneutics Today*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014. Paperback. 280 pp. ISBN 9781625649119. Reviewed by Benjamin Shaw, Ph.D.

What is hermeneutics? The term has been defined with larger words in more technically-oriented language, but it may be simply defined as the organized principles that guide the interpretation of a text, particularly the Bible. The matter of hermeneutics, whether implicitly or explicitly, has been a point of debate in the church from its very beginning, or at least from the beginning of the post-apostolic era. The hermeneutical principles applied to a particular text must be consistent with the nature and the purpose of the text under discussion. One set of principles (one hermeneutic) would be used in interpreting a paper presenting a computer model of kidney function. A different hermeneutic would be used in the interpretation of one of Grimm's fairy tales. In the former case, all statements would be taken at face value. Terms that might have different meanings in other contexts would have to be understood in the particular context of that scientific paper. In the latter case, the principles would have to correspond to the nature of the story as a fairy tale. Bruno Bettelheim's classic work *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* uses the insights and categories of Freudian psychoanalysis to

tease a Freudian meaning out of various fairy tales. In such a case, it may be questioned whether the use of such principles is really consonant with the nature and purposes of the texts to which they have been applied.

So it is with the interpretation of the Bible. Through the ages, the church has struggled to develop a set of principles for the interpretation of the Bible that is consistent with its nature as divine revelation and its purpose to direct man regarding what he “is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 2).

In her study *Reading Renunciation*, Elizabeth Clark explores the principles that interpreters of the Bible used in promoting a monastic ideal in the church in the early Middle Ages. Given certain cultural considerations distinct to the church in that period, the reader can see how the interpreters developed these principles in view of the nature and the purpose of the Bible. As a matter of history, however, the church ultimately rejected many of these principles as being inconsistent with that nature and purpose.

In a similar fashion, the church in the later Middle Ages developed what has become known as the *quadriga*, or four-fold sense of Scripture. This was an attempt to deal with the divine nature of Scripture and the consequent consideration that the full meaning of a particular biblical text did not necessarily lie only in the strict meaning of the words themselves. The approach recognized, for example, that when various passages mention “Jerusalem,” the significance of the term might not be limited to, nor primarily concerned with, the physical city in the land of Israel.

With the waning of the Middle Ages and the rise of the Renaissance, the four-fold hermeneutic came into question. Doubt began to be cast not only on its utility, but also on its reliability. Interpreters began to recognize within this hermeneutic a tendency to over-interpret texts. That is, a certain amount of the interpretation seemed to be governed only by the fancy of the interpreter, and not by the principles themselves. In addition, there was a tendency to ignore or minimize the “literal” sense of the text.

With the rise of the Reformation, the *quadriga* was largely overthrown, being seen as an improper set of principles for the interpretation of Scripture. This overthrow was most obvious among the various reformers. As the Reformation progressed, the Catholic Counter-Reformation also moved away from the use of the *quadriga*, as arguments based on it had no effect on the Protestant apologists. Thus, the post-Reformation period saw an increased emphasis on the “literal”, single sense of Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith, for instance, made the point this way: “when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly” (1.9). There was at the same time, however,

a recognition that the single sense of Scripture was not necessarily a simple single sense, but rather was often complex. This issue is addressed, for example, in William Whitaker’s *Disputations on Scripture* (Fifth Question) and Turretin’s *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Topic 3, Q 19). A modern discussion is presented in Richard Muller’s *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Scripture* (Chapter 7). All of these changes and developments arose in an effort to develop hermeneutical principles consistent with the nature and purpose of the Bible.

During the Enlightenment, significant changes in biblical hermeneutics arose out of changes in views regarding both the nature and purpose of the Bible. For the Enlightenment interpreter, the Bible was no longer divine revelation, at least in the sense that was understood in the preceding periods. In addition, because the Enlightenment changed the view of the nature of Scripture, it also changes the view of the purpose of Scripture.

Out of the Enlightenment came historical criticism. While often referred to as “the historical-critical method,” it is not in itself a method. Instead, it is a set of assumptions about the origins, nature, and purpose of the Bible. The Bible, in this view, originated as the religious literature of Israel. Thus, the Bible is divinely inspired in some sense, but not divinely authored. Its purpose is even less clearly defined, being in some sense a historical resource for the faith of the church, but certainly not in the way expressed by the Westminster Confession. From these assumptions, various critical methodologies were developed for the study and interpretation of the Bible. Among these methodologies are source and form criticism, the earliest hermeneutical principles to arise out of the Enlightenment.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the historical-critical approach was widespread throughout Europe, with some effect in the United States as well. Many conservative scholars (the Princetonians in the US; Keil, Hengstenberg, and others in Germany) took on the apologetic task of addressing the problems presented by these new historical-critical approaches and continued to use a confessional hermeneutic in their own work. However, the historical-critical approach quickly won the day. By the 1930s, the older confessional hermeneutic was no longer considered scholarly. Biblical interpretation became more and more the work of the academy and less and less the work of the church.

As a side note, another set of principles was developed in the nineteenth century, forming the hermeneutic known today as dispensationalism. This approach developed to some extent as a reaction to the historical-critical developments, but it was also affected by the rising tide of apocalyptic views that developed both in the US and in Europe in the early part of the nineteenth century. Dispensationalism adopted the post-Reformation formula of a single sense of Scripture, but this

sense was simple rather than complex. Hence, dispensationalists insisted on a strictly literal reading of the Bible, believing that to be the only approach really consistent with the nature and purpose of Scripture. By the 1930s, dispensationalism had become primarily a sectarian hermeneutic, and was also considered to be outside mainstream biblical scholarship.

One additional element was added to Reformed hermeneutics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That is the redemptive-historical approach. This developed in the US among Southern Presbyterians in the nineteenth century and especially by Geerhardus Vos in the early twentieth century. As a method, it became influential in the Dutch church as well.

Meanwhile, the various historical-critical approaches gained increasing support in Reformed churches, both Dutch and American, over the course of the twentieth century. When the free-for-all of post-modern hermeneutics arrived in the latter part of the twentieth century, it began to have influence even in relatively conservative reformed circles. So the question is once again visited in the church: how are we to interpret the Bible? What principles are consistent with its nature and purpose?

In light of this discussion, in 2014, the Fourth Annual Conference of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary was held to discuss these issues. Speakers were present from Mid-America Reformed Seminary, the Theological University of Kampen, the Netherlands, and the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. Though the discussion focused on the issues as they relate to Dutch Reformed churches in North America and the Netherlands, the conference addresses are relevant for the Presbyterian side of the Reformed tradition as well.

The conference lectures were collected and published in this book. Most of the lectures are followed by a brief response from another participant, and a brief rejoinder from the speaker. The topics covered are: the relation between general and special revelation; post-biblical/post-critical hermeneutics; the hermeneutics of dogma; the interpretation of historical narrative; the Bible and Christian ethics; soteriology and hermeneutics; and accommodation in divine revelation. In addition, there are a number of more focused papers: the structure of Jeremiah; the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 in relation to the role of women in the church; and reader-response criticism.

In general, the Canadian and American speakers reflect a more traditional hermeneutic, in line with the approaches of the post-Reformation Reformed interpreters. The Dutch speakers reflect a hermeneutical approach that is much more influenced by current trends in the broader academy. At the risk of overstatement, the former tend to read the Bible against culture, while the latter tend to read the Bible through the lens of culture.

The essays reflect the current divide not only within conservative Reformed circles, but in broader evangelical Christianity. What do we do with a Bible that seems so contrary to almost every current cultural development? The Canadian and American speakers essentially adopt what might be called a common sense approach to reading the Bible. The underlying assumption is that the Bible is God's Word. As such He has made it generally plain, and ordinary hermeneutical principles are sufficient to elucidate most of the Bible. Further, presuming a fallen race and a fallen world, the natural preferences of man and his natural cultural trends are going to be counter to God's commands. Thus, we should not be surprised if the Word of God consistently stands against our cultural practices, regardless of the where and when of our culture. The Dutch speakers have adopted a different set of hermeneutical principles. For them, while the Bible is the Word of God, it is more hidden and more mysterious than has been previously thought, because the Bible comes to us burdened by its own cultural assumptions. Thus, special hermeneutical principles are necessary to make the Bible understandable in today's culture. The point is not so much to bring the culture in line with biblical teaching, but to discover how the Bible, limited by its own cultural baggage, can speak to a culture so vastly different from the one in which the Bible originated.

Historically speaking, churches that have adopted the latter approach to hermeneutics have tended to disappear into the culture, distinct, perhaps, by name and profession but not by practice. It is only the former churches that have retained not only a distinctly Christian name, but a distinctly Christian practice as well.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary for calling and hosting the conference; to the speakers for the time and effort put into their lectures, particularly for those for whom English is not their first language. Finally, I am thankful for the publishers who have made this book available. None of us would agree with everything expressed in the book. But the collection as a whole makes available for review and discussion the issues currently facing the Reformed churches as we struggle to interpret faithfully the gracious Word of God. ■

Book Review: N. T. Wright, *Surprised By Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues*. Eugene, New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2014. Clothbound. 223 pp. ISBN 9780062230539. \$24.99. Reviewed by Rev. Jeffrey Stivason (Ph.D., WTS, Pa.), pastor of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCNA), in Gibsonia, Pa.

The title of N. T. Wright's most recent work, *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues*, may mislead readers into thinking that the author is entering into the contemporary

debate over the nature of Scripture. However, that is a pool into which this book does not wade. For material touching on the subject of the nature of revelation and the Bible one should consult the prolegomena to Wright's *The New Testament and the People of God* (MN, Minnesota: Fortress, 1992) or his little volume *The Last Word* (NY: Harper Collins, 2005).

This book, which is a collection of various papers, lectures and sermons, is about contemporary issues and what the Bible has to say about them. According to Wright, the "surprise" in the title has more to do with the fact that people may not expect the Bible to treat the contemporary issues found among the pages of *Surprised by Scripture* and they may be surprised as to what the Bible has to say about them.

Chapter One, "Healing the Divide Between Science and Religion," is an attempt to explain how the science and religion debate in North America has been conducted as a result of its embodiment of Epicurean philosophy, which has been essentially and explicitly part of the warp and woof of the United States since the eighteenth century. Wright proposes that we rethink the underlying worldview commitments that are currently at odds with one another and adopt instead the worldview offered in the four gospels. According to Wright, this has a way of removing science and religion from center stage and putting them with everything else that new creation in Christ would address.

Wright begins Chapter Two, "Do We Need A Historical Adam?" by observing two theological drivers behind the discussion to which people often hold. The first is the presupposition that if people let go of an historical Adam, "they are letting go of the authority of Scripture" (26–27). Wright believes that this is wrongheaded and is the result of an inaccurate view of biblical authority and its function. According to Wright, the Bible's authority is derivative because the authority of God in Jesus is mediated through Scripture, which seems to indicate that it is more of a witness to God's authority than it is God's authority. But for Wright, it's not simply a question of the nature of Scripture but of responsible hermeneutics. He believes that when people start talking about dogmas and creeds they have lost sight of the Bible's central message that in Jesus God is becoming king that we might be his true royal priesthood in the world (32). Apparently, a discussion about the historicity of Adam is proof that one has lost sight of the Bible's true function.

The second theological driver, which stems from the first, is the false notion, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, that the Bible is about how we get saved (27). For Wright, this issue is particularly important for Reformed theologians who view Adam as the federal head of all who are in him. However, according to Wright, by reading Paul as saying that we are either "in Adam and condemned" or "in Christ and saved" is to misread the text or, at the very least, to read too narrowly.

For Wright, this does not take into account God's kingdom, which is the primary motif of Scripture. Therefore, Wright's construction goes like this: Adam's sin meant not only that he died but that he no longer reigned over the world (34). To put it tersely, Adam had lost God's image, and consequently his vocation or calling. Thus, God's plan for kingdom expansion had been derailed. God no longer had a priestly vice-regent. However, in Jesus God's plan was set right again. Jesus is enthroned as king, already reigning. He is where the last Adam was supposed to be (35).

Now, what does this have to do with an historical Adam? According to Wright, Israel too is in Adam (37). Israel bears the solution to the problem of God's derailed kingdom. The link between Israel and Adam is found in God's choosing of Israel. In the same way that he chose Israel from among the nations to engage in a demanding vocation, which they failed to fulfill, perhaps, speculates Wright, in like manner God chose Adam and Eve from among the early hominids to represent the whole human race in order to take God's kingdom forward into the world. This construct is more speculative and creative than biblical.

What is more, no one doubts that the kingdom of God has come in Jesus. We may debate with Wright about what this actually means but the coming of the kingdom is not in dispute. However, what we will dispute with Wright about is his interpretation of Romans 5:12–21. Wright contends that these verses mean that God's whole creation project is put back on track and not about traditional soteriology. However, beyond these affirmations Wright gives us nothing with which we may contend because "there isn't time for a full exegesis here" (34). It appears that there wasn't time in his *New Interpreter's Bible* commentary on Romans either. As Dr. Lane G. Tipton sums up in *Justified in Christ: God's Plan for Us in Justification* (Great Britain: Mentor, 2007), "It is disappointing that Wright opts to avoid the most important exegetical and theological issues pertaining to imputation in a text that so clearly appears to demand the historic reformed doctrine of imputation." The same could be said with regard to Wright's *Justification: God's and Paul's Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009). So, perhaps Professor Wright will forgive us for not giving up our traditional soteriological position on Romans 5:12–21 until we hear a fuller explanation.

In Chapter Three, "Can a Scientist Believe in the Resurrection?" Wright explores the fault lines between scientific knowledge, historical knowledge, and other modes encompassed in the loose designation of faith, hope, and love. This chapter, like Chapter One, focuses on the idea of worldview. In this case, Wright argues that the Jewish hope of life beyond the grave went through seven modifications. This, he says, demands an historical explanation, which leads him to speak about the resurrection narratives. According to Wright,

scientific historiography would be satisfied with these accounts but it rarely is because love is the deepest mode of knowing. And this is the mode of knowing that is necessary if we are to live in “the world in which Jesus is Lord and Caesar isn’t” (63).

Chapter Four, “The Biblical Case for Ordaining Women,” has some interesting features, not the least of which is his view that Galatians 3:28 is a quote from Genesis and so should be translated “no male and female” rather than the traditional “neither male nor female,” (66) which, of course, totally breaks down any distinction between male and female. Whereas before in Christ there is neither male nor female now there is no male or female. However, one wonders how Wright can argue that in Galatians Paul obliterates roles regarding church leadership when in Ephesians Paul explains how the effects of the curse in Adam are reversed when the man leads in love and the wife submits. The proof is in the eating. Therefore, Galatians 3 does not do what those trying push the gender envelope wish that it would do. Ironically, Wright realizes that his case is very speculative and so he admits in a moment of candor—“that’s a lot of *perhapses*.” Like much of Wright’s work this essay is creative and provocative but it is far too speculative to entertain seriously.

Chapter Five, “Jesus is Coming—Plant a Tree!” revisits the idea that emerged in Chapter Two, namely, that the church has read Paul wrongly because it reads him through a soteriological lens. But, contends Wright, the book of Romans is not about how we get saved. Instead, it is about God’s plan to make the whole earth his holy land through his priestly representatives. Wright obviously has Dispensational theology’s “don’t polish the handrail of a sinking ship” notion in mind (101–102).

However, it is Wright’s view of the Creator/creature distinction that is most troublesome in this article. He says, “Jesus is not far away; he is in heaven, and *heaven is not a place in the sky, but rather God’s dimension of what we think of as ordinary reality*” (96). A few lines later we read, “[*the*] *two spaces or spheres will be joined forever, and Jesus himself will be the central figure*” (97). What kind of ontology is Wright talking about? In Wright’s book *Surprised By Hope* he fills in his ontology a bit more by saying, “God’s space and ours interlock and intersect in a whole variety of ways even while they retain, for the moment at least, their separate and distinct identities and roles” ([NY: Harper One, 2008], 116).

Several years ago on pages 97–98 of Wright’s *New Testament and the People of God* (Minn, MN: Fortress, 1992) he told us that he was going to offer a new ontology in his fifth volume in the series. Is this it—a collapsing together of the Creator/creature distinction? This is very problematic. Although the article helpfully reminds the believer that ecology should be an important aspect of stewardship, the ideas come wrapped in

an underdeveloped ontology and an all too familiar accusation that for hundreds of years the church “has been sub-biblical in its approach” to Scripture, especially in the areas of eschatology and ecology (83).

Chapter Six, “9/11, Tsunamis, and the New Problem of Evil,” is an abbreviation of Wright’s book *Evil and the Justice of God*. According to Wright, the older ways of talking about evil “pose the puzzle as a metaphysical or theological conundrum,” which have led us to ignore evil and we are then surprised when it happens to us (111–113). For Wright, this view is immature and leads to dangerous ways of handling evil. This leaves him open to explain that despite the lack of easy answers in the Bible we must still turn to the Scriptures in order to formulate a response. According to Wright, certain Old Testament stories and figures help. However, in Isaiah we find a suffering servant who embodies God’s purposes and God’s rescue mission for Israel and the world (117–118).

Jesus sought to embody the prophetic servant figure. The gospels tell the story of how the evil in the world—political, social, personal, moral, and emotional put Jesus on the cross (120). In other words, according to Wright, Jesus was literally shouldering the direct result of political, social, personal, moral, and emotional manifestations of evil and he saw himself doing it metaphorically for the nation of Israel. But Wright contends that Jesus didn’t do these things for Israel alone. Remember, according to Wright, Israel is the place where the rest of the world can see what God is doing about evil. Therefore, says Wright, Jesus is Israel’s and the world’s representative (122). He can stand in for all.

Yet, the question that begs to be asked is a simple one: How does the death of Jesus help me? If Wright’s Jesus, was taking on himself the consequences of the first century political system, personal estrangement, and all the social and cultic repercussions, then fine. But how does that help me?

Wright is not long in providing an answer. Jesus’ death is an example of how to love others. Wright understands the theological implications of reducing the cross to a mere example. So, he says, “The cross is not just an example to be followed; it is an achievement to be worked out, put into practice. But it is an example nonetheless, because it is the exemplar, the template, the model, for what God now wants to do, by his spirit, in the world, through his people.” According to Wright, the suffering love of God which Jesus modeled and we are to emulate is the God-given answer to the evils of the world (124). Thus, for Wright, Jesus enacted his plan to suffer metaphorically for Israel on Passover, a time of freedom in Israel’s history and Jesus hoped that others would catch the metaphor and follow his example. Thus, despite Wright’s contention that Jesus acted as a representative of Israel, as he says in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Jesus’ representation was merely a great symbolic action emerging from his fallible sense

of vocation—according to Wright, that is (Minneapolis, MN: 1996, cf. 595–596; 601–611).

Thus, Wright's solution is in keeping with his non-transactional soteriology. In other words, the sins of God's people were in no way imputed to Jesus. He suffered as a representative in a metaphorical manner only. The hope is that others will follow the model that he left behind. In the final analysis it is hard to see the good news in this view of the atonement.

Chapter Seven, "How the Bible Reads the Modern World," is Wright's attempt to diagnose the role that the Bible has played in American culture. He attempts to determine what those roles have been and then ask whether the Bible might suggest that we approach these things differently (130). The article has familiar Wrightian themes, such as, a synopsis of his critical realist approach to epistemology, and the wrongheadedness of Dispensational theology, and elements of worldview. It ought to be mentioned that Epicureanism plays a central role in several of these chapters, which is likely the result of his having read Stephen Greenblatt's, *The Swerve* (9).

Chapter Eight, "Idolatry 2.0," is an interesting chapter. Wright helps us to understand that despite the Epicurean foundation of modern science and political autonomy, which was as dismissive of the ancient pagan gods as it is Christianity, the gods have a way of finding their way back into the system (154). In this case, Wright explores how Mars, the god of war, Mammon, the god of money, and Aphrodite, the goddess of erotic love have made inroads into a secular American culture. Wright's proposal is that we stop following the Epicurean split of the Enlightenment world. In other words, we mend the breach between God and his creation by taking a fresh look at Jesus as God's love extended to the world he created (161).

Chapter Nine, "Our Politics are too Small," is really about applying the gospel in a non-secular and non-fundamentalist way. According to Wright, in a characteristically sweeping statement "the entire Western church, Catholic and Protestant, evangelical and liberal, charismatic and social activist, has not actually known what the Gospels are there for" (167). This hardly surprising statement about the ineptitude of the church to read its own Bible is followed up by Wright telling us that the Gospels are not about how God planned to redeem individual souls but instead confront dehumanizing tyranny with a gospel that will restore genuine humanness (168–170). Chapter Ten, "How to Engage Tomorrow's World," extends the thought of Chapter Nine.

Chapter Eleven, "Apocalypse and the Beauty of God," is Wright's attempt to help us see who is really able to communicate God's truth in story. For Wright, it is the Christian artist who is really able to tell the story. What Wright does not do in this article is tie his view of the aesthetically minded to revelation and the Bible. However, since this book is supposed to be about Scripture we will take a brief excursion to look at

Wright's view of revelation and the Bible and so notice how they interconnect with the Christian artist and his ability to tell the Christian story.

So, according to Wright, what is revelation? He says, "Language about religion and revelation does indeed reflect many elements in human consciousness, and can indeed be used as a weapon of oppression. But this does not vitiate all such language. Post-Nietzschean, post-Freudian and post-Marxian humans—artists, writers, musicians, lovers, as well as religious persons—still tell stories about aspects of reality that transcend power, sex, and money." But where are these stories to be found? Wright continues, "These aspects, for some, in the Bible and the Christian (or other religious) stories; for others, in the beauty of creation; for others, in other human beings; for others again, deep within themselves. This gives rise to enormous problems, about natural theology, revelation and reason, and so on. But these stories suggest that we must, however critically, recognize the presence of something we may as well call 'revelation'" (*The New Testament and the People of God*, 129).

Wright's explanation of revelation breaks down into the following points. First, Wright contends that "there is no straight line that leads from humans to some sort of revelation and thence to unambiguously true statements about divine being(s)" (*NTPG*, 128). It is likely Wright has an Old Princeton model in mind. B. B. Warfield defines revelation in light of its varying shades of usages, but in its active sense as "the act of God by which he communicates to man the truth concerning himself—his nature, works, will or purpose." According to Wright, this is dangerous and simply put, it is not correct. But Wright has this to say in his article "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative," published in *Vox Evangelica*, "There is an implied and quite unwarranted positivism: we imagine that we are 'reading the text, straight', and that if somebody disagrees with us it must be because they, unlike ourselves, are secretly using 'presuppositions' of this or that sort. This is simply naïve, and actually astonishingly arrogant and dangerous" (*Vox Evangelica*, 21, 1991).

Second, stories about aspects of reality that transcend power, sex, and money still exist. These stories are to be called, not uncritically, revelation. According to Wright, the Bible, as well as any other religious story is one more piece of sense data that is subject to Wright's critical realist epistemology. Thus, at the end of the day, for a critical realist, my reason stands in judgment over revelation. Since Wright functions according to a critical realist epistemology, reason may find these stories in non-Christian contexts being told best by the aesthetically minded.

Third, according to Wright, god talk becomes public domain because in this way we can talk about worldviews and "discern which possibilities are serious contenders for truth.

Critical realism can thus affirm the right of theological language to be regarded as an appropriate dimension of discourse about reality.” (NTPG, 130) Now, remember, we are still talking about Wright’s view of revelation and not about his view of Scripture. And Wright has at least two reasons for keeping the two separate.

First, according to Wright, in *The Last Word* (p. 38), God’s word (which, if I understand him correctly, corresponds in some way to revelation) is not to be used as a synonym for the written Scriptures. Instead God’s word is a “strange personal presence, creating, judging, healing, and recreating.” Again, one can pick up aspects of it in a variety of places but God’s word is not Scripture. To argue in that direction would be positivistic. Second, according to Wright, God’s word and the written Scriptures may contradict one another.

Now, with these points we need to move our discussion to Wright’s view of the Bible. According to Wright, the Bible is authoritative. Now, before we get into what he means we need to ask a more basic question, namely, how do we know the Bible is authoritative? After all, when considering various worldviews, Wright says, “we need to discern which possibilities are serious contenders for truth” (NTPG, 130). So, what makes Christianity a viable contender? Wright answers this question and the argument that he offers is from his book *Simply Christian*. Let’s walk through the argument.

Wright contends that we all dream for justice. And then we wake up and come back to reality. But, he asks, what are we hearing in that dream? After all, the voice of the dream echoes in our imagination. Well, Wright says that there are three ways of explaining the voice: a) we can say it is only a dream; b) we can say that the dream is of a different world altogether, a world to which we can escape but has little to do with the present; or c) the voice is one who not only made us but is present with us putting the world right (SC, 8–10). Wright contends that the voice in our dream for justice is also heard in art, whether it be music or painting or pencil or whatever (remember, artists are among those types who are able to hear revelation and, of course, Wright sees himself among the aesthetically minded [cf. *Surprised by Scripture*, xi]). But more than that, creation is beautiful and is filled with glory. The glory of creation is another form of the same voice “echoing off the crags, murmuring in the sunset. It is the power we feel in the crashing of the waves and the roar of the lion” (SC, 45).

Let’s stop to make two observations. First, Wright says, “Three of the great religious traditions have taken this last option, and not surprisingly they are related; they are, as it were, second cousins” (SC, 9–10). Wright claims the reason why each of these religions claims to have heard a voice is because they have. And though they have many differences they are agreed that God will put the world to rights. And, says Wright, we

can get in touch with this voice. Of course, the book *Simply Christian* is written to commend one of those traditions. But the question we must ask is why? Why commend Christianity? What makes it authoritative among the three?

In Chapter Five, Wright makes what seems to be a bold claim when he says, “The Christian story claims to be the true story about God and the world” (SC, 55). But can this claim be in any sense proven? The answer from Wright is quite obviously, no. But certainly one must wonder—wouldn’t it be possible to dub another religion the author of this voice? The same negative answer given for Christianity must also be given to any other contender. The answer is no. But why are these other traditions wrong or at least not as useful as Christianity? Wright claims, “Not all ‘holy books’ are the same sort of thing. The great writers of the Hindu tradition—the Bhagavad Gita, in particular—do not offer a controlling story within which the readers are summoned to become characters.... The Koran... is a different sort of thing again, much more like (in fact) that kind of hard-edged authoritative book which some would consider the Bible to be.... Even Judaism doesn’t tell a continuing story of the Christian sort...” (SC, 189–190).

The implication is obvious. The Judeo Christian Bible is better, not because it is the infallible word of God, but because it “generates a narrative within which one is called to live; that living within that story generates a call to a particular vocation within the world; and that the Bible is the book through which God sustains and directs those who seek to obey that vocation as intelligent, thinking, image bearing human beings” (SC, 190). Clearly, for Wright, the Bible is not an infallible word from God, but rather a book that gives us a vocation in the world (SC, 183, 189). What is more, it “offers in a more primary way energy for the task to which God is calling his people (SC, 182). And again, “Scripture is there to enable us to glimpse the task before us and to become the sort of people through whom that task can be attempted and accomplished” (SC, 182). It is this point, and not another, that leads Wright to think about the Bible in authoritative terms.

So, what does the authority of Scripture look like? Wright says we ought to think of the Bible as authoritative in the same way we might think of a Shakespearean play. Suppose there exists a play by Shakespeare that is incomplete and missing the fifth act. However, the first four acts are simply remarkable and Shakespearean experts believe that the play ought to be put on. But what do we do with the fifth act? If we write a fifth act then we might freeze the play into a form and generations to come might assign this to Shakespeare simply for form’s sake. “Better it might be felt, to give the key parts to highly trained, sensitive and experienced Shakespearean actors, who would immerse themselves in the first four acts, and in the language and culture of Shakespeare and his time, and who would then be told to work out the fifth act for themselves” (NTPG, 140).

Consider the result, says Wright: “The first four acts, existing as they did, would be the undoubted ‘authority’ for the task in hand. That is, anyone could properly object to the new improvisation on the grounds that some character was now behaving inconsistently, or that some sub-plot or theme, adumbrated earlier, had not reached its proper resolution. This ‘authority’ of the first four acts would not consist—could not consist!—in an implicit command that the actors should repeat the earlier parts of the play over and over again. It would consist in the fact of an as yet unfinished drama, containing its own impetus and forward movement, which demanded to be concluded in an appropriate manner. It would require of the actors free and responsible entering into the story as it stood, in order first to understand how the threads could appropriately be drawn together and then put that understanding into effect by speaking and acting with both innovation and consistency. This model could and perhaps should be adapted further: it offers quite a range of possibilities” (*NTPG*, 140). So, the Bible is a book that provides us with a narrative and energizes us that we might participate in that narrative. It is in this way that the authority of the story governs our living. The only problem is that this view of Scripture seems lower than Scripture’s view of itself. And in that case, I think I will opt for Scripture’s view.

Chapter Twelve, the final essay, “Becoming a People of Hope,” does its best to help us see ahead to the new creation through the resurrection of Jesus. It is filled with the language of hope, forgiveness, and love. But after reading this and other books from Professor Wright, one can’t help wondering how a metaphorical suffering enacted by a Messiah who understood that shaping a worldview is a “huge gamble” and that “he might have been deeply mistaken” (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 609) really gives all that much hope. Surely the Scriptures offer more hope than Professor Wright allows. Perhaps a book from Professor Wright explaining the Bible’s view of hope would be as surprising as it would be appealing. ■

Book Review: Willem J. van Asselt et al., *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae/Synopsis of a Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation—Volume 1, Disputations 1–23*. *Studies in medieval and Reformation traditions*, v. 187. Leiden: Brill, 2015. Hardcover. 659 pp. ISBN 9789004192188. \$154.00. Reviewed by Wes Bredenhof, Th.D., Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania, Australia.

Leiden University was the first Dutch university, established in 1575. Its most well-known theological professor is undoubtedly Jacob Arminius—he served on the faculty of theology from 1603 until his death in 1609. His tenure at Leiden was marked by conflict, especially with fellow professor Franciscus Gomarus. After the death of Arminius, his views continued

to be controversial amongst the Reformed until a resolution was finally reached at the Synod of Dort in 1618–19. Following the Synod of Dort, the theological faculty of Leiden University was reorganized—three new professors were appointed to join the orthodox Johannes Polyander who was already serving there since 1611. They were Antonius Walaeus, Antonius Thysius, and Andreas Rivetus. These four men originally authored the work under review, usually referred to simply as the Leiden Synopsis.

The Synopsis was written as a compendium of Reformed theology, intended to function within the university as a handbook, but also outside as a guide to orthodoxy. It takes the form of disputations. Each disputation was written by one of the four professors. Each deals with a particular topic divided up into theses. At Leiden University, theological students would be required to either defend or attack the theses contained in the disputations. This would not only teach the students Reformed theology, but also equip them to defend it. This particular type of training was distinctively scholastic and the Leiden Synopsis is properly described as a “handbook of scholastic Reformed theology.” Of course, when we use the word “scholastic,” it should be clear that this is referring to an educational approach or methodology, not a school of thought.

Since it first appeared in 1625, the Leiden Synopsis has only been available in Latin. Heinrich Heppé’s *Reformed Dogmatics* conveys some paragraphs in English, but these are few and far between. The same is true for Richard Muller’s *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*. Since the Leiden Synopsis was historically so important and influential, we can be thankful for the appearance of this first volume of disputations in a critical edition with both Latin and English texts. It is the product of an international research group entitled Classic Reformed Theology. Canadian classics professor Dr. Riemer Faber was the translator for this volume, while Dr. Dolf te Velde from the Netherlands handled most of the editing. Various others, mostly in the Netherlands, assisted in the project. The end result is impressive.

Two types of readers would be especially interested in this volume of the Leiden Synopsis (and the two forecasted to follow). One would be the professional systematic theologian or historical theologian. The Leiden Synopsis holds a significant place in the development of Reformed theology. It was written with the intention of expressing the consensus view of confessional Reformed theology in its day and is therefore an important reference point. The other would be the scholar-pastor who is looking for an intellectually stimulating presentation of Reformed theology that might sharpen his own preaching and teaching. Unfortunately, for many of these types of readers, the price will be a significant obstacle. While the publisher’s list price is \$154.00 USD, my final cost including shipping

ended up being closer to \$250.00 CAD—this is now the most expensive book I own! Physically the book is certainly handsome and well-produced, and the content is exceptional, but I do lament the fact that the cost is going to place it out of reach for many of my pastoral colleagues.

Regarding the content, this volume contains the first 23 disputations out of a total of 52. These disputations cover the following five general subject areas:

1. Scripture as the foundation of theology (disputations 1–5)
2. The Triune God (6–9)
3. The creation of the world (10–12)
4. Humanity as creatures fallen into sin (13–17)
5. God’s address to humanity in law and gospel (18–23)

Besides the Latin text and English translation, there are extensive explanatory footnotes from the editors. These are helpful for orienting readers to the original world of the Synopsis. The editors have also included a 20 page introduction to the work, as well as a glossary, bibliography and indexes.

The Leiden Synopsis is surprisingly relevant on some important theological issues facing the Church today. For example, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy continues to be debated, with some claiming that it is a modern invention, perhaps dating back to the nineteenth century at the earliest. However, in disputation 2, we find Walaeus writing, “It is made clear to us that the authority of Holy Scripture is much greater than that of the Church by the fact that the Church is capable of erring while Scripture cannot” (71). Sometimes it is claimed that biblical inspiration or inerrancy only extends to doctrines. In other words, the core teachings of Scripture are inspired and even inerrant, but this does not apply to “peripheral” matters. This notion existed in the days of the Leiden Synopsis already and Walaeus had a ready answer in thesis 28:

And here one ought not to pay heed to Socinus and several other Christians who grant that Holy Scripture is divinely-originated in issues of special importance, but that its authors in situations and circumstances of lesser importance were abandoned by the Holy Spirit and could have erred. Because this opinion paves the way for contempt, and expressly contradicts Scripture which testifies that “everything that was written was written for our instruction (Romans 15:4), and “all Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). Likewise, “no Scripture is of one’s own interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20); indeed, “not even one iota will disappear from the Law” (Matthew 5:18). “And it is not permitted for any man to add or to remove from it” (Deuteronomy 4[:2], Revelation 22[:18–19]).” (69)

In a footnote, the editors point out that besides Faustus Socinus, Walaeus noted elsewhere that Erasmus displayed “the same pernicious view.”

When it comes to the doctrine of creation too, the Leiden Synopsis presents an orthodox, biblical view. There is nothing discernibly novel or “creative” here. Polyander argues that everything was created “in the space of six days” (249). Thysius maintains God created Adam immediately from the dust of the earth and this has theological significance: “Moreover, just as the earthly material is a reminder of our weakness and proof of our humbler nature (Genesis 3:19), so too the immediate and exceptional fashioning is a testimony to our dignity” (319).

Disputation 12 discusses angels and includes consideration of their nature and creation. Walaeus is aware of excessive medieval speculation about angels and critiques some of that. He does strive to observe only the teaching of Scripture and not stray too far in terms of inferences. However, when he states in thesis 7 that angels were created in the image of God (with no scriptural proof), I wonder whether he falls back into some of the medieval patterns. To be fair, Walaeus was not unique amongst post-Reformation theologians in holding this position (Amandus Polanus, Bernardinus de Moor, and others did too), yet the inconsistency should be noted.

A comparison has often been made between the Presbyterian view of the Lord’s Day and the “Continental Reformed” approach. It is said that the Presbyterian view is more strict, whereas the Reformed give more latitude. Disputation 21 by Thysius provides ample evidence to the contrary. The discussion is careful and well-nuanced, yet it is clear that the Lord’s Day is to be honoured highly by Christians. Consider thesis 60:

But we reject entirely those who overturn the Lord’s Day under the pretext of Christian liberty, such as the Anabaptists of today. We also reject those who hold that the Sabbath day of old is not so much abolished as merely transferred and altered into the Day of the Lord, and that it is actually a holy day not because of the ordinance and use of it, but because of its significance and effect; such are some of the Scholastics and papal theologians. And finally, we seriously reproach those who profane the Lord’s Day, those who violate it not just by performing unnecessary or irrelevant activities (such as entertainments, games and plays) but also by their licentiousness, extravagance and every sort of disgrace, with the consequence of irreparable scandals to those who are weak, and horrendous infamy to the Christian reputation. (553)

There is some difference here from what is found some time later in the Westminster Standards, but the difference is not nearly as great as some have made it out to be.

One other thing to note is the way in which the Leiden Synopsis often echoes the Three Forms of Unity. While there are no explicit and direct references to these confessions, the language is sometimes unmistakably familiar. For example, in disputation 16, Walaeus is discussing original sin. Thesis 45 mentions how believers struggle with sin and the language instantly makes you think of article 4 of chapter 5 of the Canons of Dort. This is not altogether surprising when the list of delegates to the Synod of Dort is reviewed and the name of Walaeus is included as a professor (as were Thysius and Polyander).

Formally speaking, from what I can tell, the volume's English translation has been generally well-done. It certainly is readable English. There are some instances where the translation is unusually colloquial—this despite the fact that the original contains “highly developed technical language” and the translator/editors have “sought to preserve the language, tone, and sentence structure” (19). There are also some odd inconsistencies in the English capitalizing—for example, sometimes pronouns used in reference to God are capitalized,

but at other times not (the Latin original never does). That might be distracting to some readers.

The footnotes have been noted before and these are helpful and seem generally accurate. For example, footnote 33 on page 313 is quite informative about the acceptance of the belief in guardian angels in Reformed theology. But there are some oversights or infelicities in a few footnotes. For example, in disputation 5, thesis 26, Walaeus quotes from Psalm 25. Footnote 11 says, “This phrase is unclear; the Latin quoted by Walaeus differs from the text of the Vulgate.” Yes, the text does differ, because Walaeus was not using the Latin Vulgate. Instead, like other Reformed theologians of his era, he used the better Latin text produced by Immanuel Tremellius. The opaque translation traces back to Tremellius.

All things considered, this reviewer heartily congratulates the Classic Reformed Theology group on this first volume of the Leiden Synopsis. It is a valuable contribution to the study of historic Reformed theology and spiritually edifying in its own right. I eagerly look forward to seeing the other two volumes, scheduled for 2016 and 2018 respectively. ■

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