

## REVIEWS & RESPONSES

**Review:** Jeffrey Hause (ed.), *Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). ISBN 9781107109261. 269 + x pp. Hardback. \$99.99. Reviewed by Harrison Perkins (PhD, Queen's University Belfast), the assistant minister at London City Presbyterian Church (Free Church of Scotland), a lecturer in Christian doctrine at Cornhill Belfast, and the author of the forthcoming *Catholicity and the Covenant of Works: James Ussher and the Reformed Tradition* (Oxford University Press).

This review focuses on a new work meant to introduce themes and interpretations concerning Thomas Aquinas' most famous work the *Summa Theologiae*, but this review also aims to point readers of this journal more broadly to this book's relevance for our tradition and contemporary discussion within it. Thomas (1225–1274) was one of the most prolific theologians of the medieval period. He was the first medieval figure to be named a doctor of the church. His teaching was controversial at times in his own era, but yet there has been debate over his legacy ever since. With the recent resurgence of interest in the classical doctrine of God in Protestant circles, Thomas' name is featuring more frequently and more prominently in a host of even Reformed theological works, at least broadly considered, theological works. Some quarters of Dutch scholarship have suggested that Reformed people should lean most heavily on the works of John Duns Scotus (1266–1308), who promoted a rival theology to Thomas.<sup>1</sup> Richard Muller, the foremost historian of the Reformed tradition, however, has persuasively argued that Reformed people were always eclectic in their appropriation of the preceding tradition, but that there was always a positive Thomistic strand.<sup>2</sup> Some have lambasted Thomas as a nearly pagan philosopher and others have championed him as a primary source for recovering classical notions of the Christian tradition. Without wading into the very thorny issues of these debates, how can the book under review help us with these issues?

Jeffrey Hause has compiled a collection of essays that address various issues in understanding Thomas' most known work, the *Summa*. There are many companion volumes already in print concerning Thomas and even specifically regarding his *Summa*, so the obvious question is why this one is necessary.<sup>3</sup> The main reason is that there is a lot to say about Thomas and his *Summa*, and there have been a

massive amount of interpretations of that book in the past eight-hundred years for which we need much help giving account. Each companion volume addresses different issues, and certainly from different perspectives, but having these can help confessional Presbyterians start to get a handle on or knowledge of the vast amount of literature on these topics.

Within this volume, as with any collection of essays, there are multiple approaches not only to Thomas, but also to the task of introducing a specific aspect of his thought. Some of these essays break down Thomas' work into specific premises and analyze if these premises coherently hold together. Because Thomas wrote lengthy discursive "treatises" within the *Summa*, these essays, for example JT Paasch on the Trinity, have to make use of a great many numbered premises. This tightly analytical approach to Thomas' work can make it very difficult for readers to follow because it requires keeping up with or flipping back to sixty-four premises in Paasch's case. While that may be exactly what needs to be done in analytic philosophy, this reviewer wonders if that is the best approach to Thomas' discursive theology. Although it is certainly legitimate to ask whether or not Thomas was correct, which will obviously be a pressing question for readers of this journal, the analytic approach seems at times to interrogate Thomas apart from his historical context. It seems to ask Thomas to square his argument according to a form that was not his own. Some readers may greatly appreciate this approach to Thomas' work. Others may find it lacking. This tension points to the need, if one wants to take Thomas truly seriously, to read Thomas himself and, for good or for ill, several of the volumes that interpret him.

One shortcoming in a volume written primarily by philosophers is that they wanted to consider Thomas primarily philosophically. For example, Robert Pasnau's essay seems

RESPONSES critical of articles and reviews may be submitted for consideration for publication by sending drafts to the editorial address. Please contact the editor at editor@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. E.g. Antonie Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Antonie Vos, *The Theology of John Duns Scotus* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

2. Richard A. Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

3. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

to consider Thomas only for his value for philosophical concerns. Pasnau elsewhere has made clear that he approaches Thomas in that way.<sup>4</sup> This reviewer, however, is not sure that approach does justice to Thomas' own concerns. Within this volume, Jacob Schmutz's essay demonstrated that an emphasis on Thomas as a philosopher was not one native to Thomas himself, but was imposed upon him by later selective printings of selections from the *Summa* combined with attempts to read him strictly philosophically. There has been immense fragmentation of how to read Thomas in this regard, at least from the early-modern period. This essay in particular is incredibly helpful for those in our tradition who want to engage Thomas, as it reminds us to keep in mind the distinction between criticizing Thomas himself and criticizing Thomism(s). Thomas definitely made use of philosophical categories that were live issues in his day, but that sort of appropriation has always been the case in Christian theology. The issue is whether or not appropriate modifications are made to those philosophical categories. In this volume, Pasnau presented Thomas as making outright Platonic statements, but that likely owes more to his reading of Thomas as a philosopher than to Thomas himself. Kathryn Tanner, who writes from a broadly Reformed perspective, has previously discussed this issue of Platonic ideas in Thomas' doctrine of creation and offered significant evidence that Thomas adjusted these appropriated notions from Plato to harmonize with a Christian distinction between Creator and creature.<sup>5</sup> It requires care and study to engage Thomas in a balanced way and this volume points us to that need, and provides introductions to help understand these issues.

Whereas some essays in this collection treat Thomas more philosophically, others do helpfully engage Thomas at the theological level. Michael Gorman's essay on Christology is perhaps the most helpful of the collection in this regard. His approach of outlining the treatise on Christology in the *Summa*, addressing the relevance of placement and structure, analyzing the treatise itself, and then looking at material on Christology outside the treatise, made for an incredibly clear essay that genuinely helps readers know how to approach that aspect of the *Summa* for themselves. Jean Porter's essay

is a deeply informed reading of Thomas' account of natural law that is immensely helpful for understanding the nuanced ways that Thomas related various categories of law. It should certainly be consulted by readers of this journal who are trying to make sense historically (and biblically) of current debates about natural law. Thomas Osborne's essay on faith and reason is also immensely helpful in directing readers to Thomas' theological purpose in the *Summa*. Although there are certainly philosophical considerations in the *Summa*, Thomas was a theologian trying to make sense of God in dependence on divine revelation. The use of rational argumentation to support that task does not undermine the fact that Thomas started from a posture of receiving divine revelation. If God is the first principle, then God is the presupposition of rational argument for God. This is a far cry from the "pure reason" of the Enlightenment. Many of these essays are excellent introductions to considering debated theological issues about Thomas.

There are definitely ways in which readers of this journal will differ from Thomas. For example, confessional Presbyterians will obviously reject Thomas' explanation of the doctrine of justification. This rejection, however, does not mean we cannot learn to appreciate things Thomas said. Augustine, the great champion of sovereign grace in the early church, also understood the doctrine of justification, properly speaking, in a way that readers here will reject.<sup>6</sup> Despite this issue, Presbyterians still claim to stand in the Augustinian lineage and claim legitimate recourse to Augustine's view of grace over against the Roman Catholic claims to his heritage. It is not obvious to this reviewer why if we are to extend the courtesy of reasonable modification to Augustine that we should not be willing to extend that to Thomas as well. After all, despite how both understood justification proper in transformative terms, both did argue to uphold other doctrinal structures that protected the necessity of divine grace in salvation.<sup>7</sup> That is not to say confessional Presbyterians will follow Thomas in every respect. The point is that pre-Reformation theologians should perhaps receive more patience than post-Reformation demurrers. Early-modern Reformed theologians were willing to make positive use of Thomas for their own ends, albeit often with modification. Volumes like Hause's collection of essays will help guide us into ways that we might do so as well. Confessional Presbyterians must go *ad fontes*. It is not best practice to accept the Neo-Thomist reading of Thomas uncritically because that tradition intended to adopt Thomas to the ends of suiting debates about modernity. This critical guide to Thomas' *Summa* will help readers to ask better questions of that work and know some of the issues as they seek to explore the web of Thomas' ideas for themselves.

4. Christopher Shields and Robert Pasnau, *The Philosophy of Aquinas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

5. Kathryn Tanner, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion to the Summa*, 142–55.

6. Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 38–54. This citation of this work is not an endorsement of all of McGrath's conclusions. It is simply to demonstrate that Augustine's definition of justification proper is not that of confessional Presbyterians.

7. Michael Horton, *Justification Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 84–91, 100–24.

**Review:** Cornelis Venema, *Chosen in Christ: Revisiting the Contours of Predestination*, Reformed, Exegetical and Doctrinal Studies (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2019). ISBN 9781527102354. Pp. 403. Paperback. \$19.99. Reviewed by Daniel Ragusa, who received his M.Div. from Mid-America Reformed Seminary and is currently a Ph.D student at Westminster Theological Seminary.

The stated aim of Cornel Venema's *Chosen in Christ: Revisiting the Contours of Predestination* is fourfold: "to treat the doctrine of election in biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral perspective" (21). While predestination has evoked debates and questions throughout church history, and while the lack of any universal consensus magnifies the present state of theology as a *theologia viatrum*, Venema highlights significant reasons for continued reflection upon the doctrine, which warrant this present volume. First and foremost, it is impossible to marginalize the Scripture's teaching on the subject, for it is presented as the lifeblood of redemptive history. "Anyone who attends to the biblical story of redemption can hardly fail to ask the question to which the doctrine of election provides an answer: What ultimately lies behind these gracious initiatives of God? ... [T]he doctrine of election ... lies before and underneath the whole course of the triune God's redemptive actions throughout the course of history" (12). Furthermore, the doctrine is linked with two key, interrelated motifs in Scripture that are at the heart of Christian living to the glory of God: humility and thanksgiving before our triune God for his gracious and merciful election in Christ.

Its significance notwithstanding, the doctrine of predestination has led to uneasiness on the part of many, especially as it relates to the notions of assurance of salvation and human freedom. The latter is felt most acutely by the postmodern mind with its ideas of a "decentered world" and "autonomous self," to borrow terms from David Wells. For this reason, Venema perceptibly observes that the commendation of the doctrine of election is really a worldview issue. "In the biblical worldview, God is the transcendent Creator of all things and the providential Lord over all that transpires within the created order.... Within the framework of this biblical understanding of who God is, the doctrine of election has its proper home" (16). For Venema, the doctrine of election cannot and must not, therefore, be revised or reconstructed in order to make peace with modernity; rather, "the doctrine of election needs to be formulated as a radical challenge and alternative to the obvious vulnerabilities of postmodernism—a little god who cannot really help us, and an autonomous self with insufficient resources to handle a world where anything is possible but nothing is certain" (18). The doctrine of election alone attributes all glory to God and affords the Christian unspeakable

comfort, both of which Venema skillfully and pastorally draws out for the reader.

In keeping with the fourfold aim of the book, the first three chapters consider the doctrine from a non-speculative, biblical perspective, supplying keen insight into the organic unfolding of the doctrine in the OT (chapter one) and NT (chapter two), with special attention given to Paul's letters (chapter three). These chapters are consciously laid as the foundation for the subsequent historical, theological, and pastoral perspectives, functioning as a "touchstone by which to evaluate the biblical fidelity of these historical developments and formulations" (21).

The next three chapters take up the doctrine of election from an *historical* perspective. The first period of significant reflection was Augustine's contention with Pelagius to uphold the necessity of the sovereign grace of God in salvation, rather than ignore the consequences of original sin and falsely exalt the power and freedom of the human will (chapter four). In this chapter, Venema provides much valuable original interaction with Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings and concludes with a brief consideration of his legacy in medieval theology. Augustine's formulation would serve as a theological benchmark for all subsequent developments, including its re-emergence in Reformation theology with its commitment to salvation by grace alone (chapter five). The Augustinian/Pelagian contention culminated with the Reformed response to the Arminians at the Synod of Dort (chapter six). According to Venema, the confessionalization of the Synod's theological conclusions in the Canons of Dort established "the parameters for developments in the modern period that reflect the ongoing debate between Augustinian/Calvinist and an Arminian/semi-Pelagian formulation of the doctrine of election" (22).

On cue, Venema next looks at election from a *theological* perspective by considering the two most prominent revisions in the modern period: Karl Barth's "neo-Reformed" position (chapter seven) and Open Theism's "neo-Arminian" position (chapter eight). The former is an attempt to resolve the supposed problems in the Augustinian/Calvinistic view of a hidden decree and unknown God that permits no real assurance, only terror. The latter seeks system-wide consistency of the Arminian notion of man's libertarian free will, which requires a denial of God's foreknowledge and a wholly open future for both God and man to venture into together. For both of these revisions Venema first provides a fair and strong articulation of their position before critically assessing them and ultimately rejecting both. Particularly helpful were the troublesome features of Barth's revision that are highlighted: "(1) an ambivalence regarding the relation between God's Trinitarian being and His election to be the God who *is* for us in Jesus Christ; (2) the incoherence of Barth's emphasis upon universal election and reconciliation in Christ, and his

unwillingness to affirm or deny universalism by appealing to God's freedom to leave some who are incorrigibly unbelieving in their lost condition; and (3) the failure of Barth to do justice to the biblical witness to God's election in Christ of particular persons toward whom He chooses to be merciful" (296).

The final section considers election from a pastoral perspective, applying the book's biblical, historical, and theological findings to common practical, homiletical, and pastoral questions (chapter nine). These questions deal with the doctrine's relation to the simplicity of the gospel, notions of justice and fairness, the wideness of God's mercy, evangelism, the free offer of the gospel, human freedom and responsibility, assurance, and the glory of God that evokes doxological praise from his people (Rom 11:33–36; Eph 1:3–14).

Consistently throughout the book Venema proves himself a seasoned dogmatician with a faithful pastor's heart, a wonderful and refreshing combination that truly glorifies God and benefits his church. The structure of the book is well-crafted with the chapters building on one another and direct summary statements showing their interconnectedness. This manifests a major strength of the book: the forest is not lost for the trees. With a handle on the whole of the history of the doctrine, Venema is able to clearly and persuasively articulate the doctrine, as well as engage revisions without adopting the *zeitgeist* of modernity. He maintains his opening contention that the commendation of the doctrine of election is a worldview issue. Furthermore, Venema's non-speculative approach is to be commended as he intentionally grounds his formulation and critical assessment in Scripture, being sensitive to the organic and progressive unfolding of redemptive-history.

While the book exudes many strengths, a couple minor areas for further development or refinement surfaced. First, readers may have desired a more thorough treatment of the doctrine of election in the medieval period, which is treated in only a few pages between Augustine and the Reformation. This did not allow the nuances of the medieval theologians, especially Aquinas, Bradwardine, and Gregory of Rimini, to emerge. However, it should be kept in mind that the book does not claim to be an exhaustive treatment of predestination, but only to revisit its contours, and a substantial list of recommended resources for further study is included. Second, the analysis of Karl Barth is both judicious, penetrating, and surprisingly lucid given the subject matter, but one might prefer to speak more strongly of Barth's "reconstruction" of the doctrine of election, rather than his "revision" since this is the language that Barth himself uses to describe his project. Denoting it a "revision" may blur the fact that Barth does not maintain the basic foundation of the Calvinistic formulation of election, but instead reconstructs it from the bottom up within his theological system.

Notwithstanding these two points, *Chosen in Christ* is one

of the finest treatments of the doctrine of predestination. It is brimming with sound exegesis of the Old and New Testaments, careful historical and theological analysis, and pastoral wisdom for addressing both the perennial and more contemporary questions arising from the doctrine of election, all to the praise of God's glorious grace.

**Review: Theodore Van Raalte, *Antoine de Chandieu: The Silver Horn of Geneva's Reformed Triumvirate*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford University Press, 2018). ISBN 9780190882181. 376pp. Hardback. \$99.00. Reviewed by Thomas Haviland-Pabst.**

Since the completion of his PhD dissertation at Calvin Theological Seminary in 2013, Theodore Van Raalte, who is professor of ecclesiology at Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, has emerged as an erudite theologian with the publication of a number of articles and chapter essays. Now, thanks to Oxford Press, we have the privilege five years later of reading this publication of Van Raalte's dissertation.

The author notes in the preface that "the present work is the first monograph to study any of Antoine de Chandieu's prodigious output of scholastic theological works" (p. ix). In fact, not only is this the first monograph of its kind regarding Chandieu (1534–1591), there is a grievous lacuna of scholarly output on this French Reformer, and, except for those steeped in the history and key figures of the Reformation era, most are unaware of this significant figure. To further illustrate this lacuna, only three of Chandieu's works have been translated into English, with two of these three being translated shortly after their original publication in the sixteenth century.

Only one of his works has been published and translated more recently: *A Theological and Scholastic Treatise on the Spiritual Eating of the Body of Christ, and the Spiritual Drinking of His Blood, in the Holy Supper of the Lord*. Yet, even this work was translated from the original Latin over a hundred and fifty years ago in 1859 (original publication 1589). Needless to say, Van Raalte's treatment of this long forgotten French Reformer is a significant contribution.

In the first chapter entitled *Between Gold and Bronze: Chandieu as Silver Horn and Vase*, Van Raalte presents his case for the importance of Chandieu. The beginning pages recount the story of two men thrown into prison in Paris, with one possessing John Calvin's *Institutes* and the other held as his accomplice. One of the men was tried, found guilty of heresy, and expired in prison; the other was freed by "Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre" (p. 3). The one freed was none other than Antoine de Chandieu, who recounts the story in his work of martyrology (1563); the other was one Jean Morel, an eighteen-year-old man who likely aspired to ministry.

This French nobleman was not dissuaded from the Reformed cause by his escape from prison. Rather, he devoted the “next thirty years . . . to help—indeed, to lead—the French Reformed Churches” (p. 4), which included the use of his nobility, great wealth, theological training and his heart for Christ’s church. Not only was he a prolific writer, producing works as varied as poetry and academic treatises, but his noble status granted him access and “connections to French royalty,” which resulted in him serving as chaplain to “Henri de Navarre (future King Henry IV)” (p. 5). Despite the neglect of Chandieu in modern times, Van Raalte argues that the statements of many of his contemporaries seem to indicate his placement among a triumvirate alongside the great figures John Calvin and Theodore Beza. He was dubbed the “silver horn” for his polemical efforts on behalf of the Reformed cause as well as his fervent preaching in the churches (p. 13).

Van Raalte also offers within this first chapter a survey of the state of research on Chandieu, touching on the few essays and monographs that exist as well as a survey of research on Chandieu’s contemporaries with a focus on “studies on the relationship of method and content, or philosophy and theology, in early Reformed theology” (p. 20), which brings the reader to his central thesis: “polemical, educative, and to some extent apologetic reasons prompted the French Reformed theologian . . . Chandieu in the 1580s to adopt the tightly argued method of the schools for the transmission of Reformed theology” (p. 24). Thus, this is a work of intellectual history with a focus on Antoine de Chandieu as he relates to “the development of the scholastic presentation of Reformed theology” (p. 27). In the second chapter (*The Biography and Bibliography of a French Reformed Baron*), Van Raalte sets the necessary stage for entering into the meat of the book found in the subsequent chapters.

With the third chapter entitled *Distinct Roles for Scholastic Method and Cultured Eloquence*, Van Raalte offers a trenchant account of the intellectual history of the sixteenth century in conversation with the important scholarship which emerged in the mid-2000s. Here, he pleads for “careful historical theological study” regarding the French Reformation, of which Chandieu is a part (p. 87). Following this, he discusses such issues as the relationship between scholastic method and humanism, the reception and appropriation of Aristotle, and the degree of continuity that exists between medieval and post-medieval scholasticism, to name a few. He enlisted the aid of secondary literature on important figures (e.g., Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon) and pedagogical practices to bring clarity to these and other questions.

What emerges from this account is Van Raalte’s tentative conclusion that:

we might consider the period c. 1250–1700 as the

broad category, with medieval and post-medieval scholastic periods as subsets, and with Renaissance and Baroque scholastic periods as subsets of the post-medieval scholastic era.

Aristotle, he informs us, is the connected thread that unites this broad category of intellectual history, even though there are some complexities and discontinuities as is suggested by the aforementioned subsets. Van Raalte suggests that, even though Chandieu escapes the notice of those who argue for a *Baroque Scholasticism*, he is arguably formed “part of the pattern that led” to it (p. 112). More precisely, the secondary literature followed by Van Raalte suggests that “the time of 1575–1585 was important for the recovery of a fuller adherence to Aristotle.” Van Raalte argues in turn that Chandieu “advanced scholastic theology for the Reformed in a time when change was occurring in the wider Protestant field of theology” (p. 118).

The fourth chapter sets the stage for a discussion which will be resumed in more detail in chapter five—Chandieu’s connection to Old Aristotelianism, i.e., adherence “to Aristotle’s entire *Organon*” (p. 122)—before discussing two early works of Chandieu: *La confirmation de la discipline ecclésiastique* (1566) and *Refutatio Libelli Quem Claudius de Sainctes* (1567). The former is written in French at a more popular level and the latter is written “in Latin at a more academic level” (p. 148). Van Raalte concludes that these two earlier works show clear scholastic features as well as Chandieu’s versatility as a writer.

Much like the preceding chapter, the fifth chapter analyzes two works by Chandieu. Both of these works were written in 1577 and Van Raalte continues to assess Chandieu’s use of scholastic methods. Regarding the first work discussed (*De Legitima Vocatione Pastorum Ecclesiae Reformatae*), he concludes that though this work is more rhetoric in nature, it is crafted scholastically. The second work—*Sophismata F. Turriana . . . Recte et Theologicè Disputandi*—with the use of “overt syllogisms,” “learned Greek terms of Aristotle,” and the types of arguments employed as well as logical errors noted “present [this work as] a formidable and relatively sophisticated scholastic treatise” (p. 163–164).

This brings Van Raalte to the question of Claude Aubery (b. 1545) as a possible source for Chandieu’s scholastic method. Aubery, Chandieu’s junior by eleven years, can be placed in the Old Aristotelian approach. This approach is best understood in contrast to “Melancthonian Dialectics.” The latter tends to argue dialectically, employing logic probabilistically and thus in service of rhetoric; and the former tends to argue analytically, employing logic to ascertain “certainly true propositions” (p. 171) (though Van Raalte cautions against pressing this distinction too far). It is clear that Chandieu falls into this former category with his strong appeal to “Aristotle’s analytics and

critic[ism] [of] those who neglect it” (p. 170). Yet, Van Raalte presents various reasons to reject the thesis that Chandieu was dependent on Aubery for his use of Aristotle. He argues instead that two major works on Aristotle by Jacob Schegk, a German Lutheran, are more likely “the inspiration and source” of Chandieu’s “promotion of the analytical method” (p. 173).

As the title to the sixth chapter suggests (*Theology as a Science That Benefits from a Scholastic Method*), we are given a fascinating glance at Chandieu’s understanding of the relationship between the scholastic method and theology. Beginning in 1580, Chandieu wrote six treatises, with all of their titles, though varying in different details, containing “theological and scholastic” terminology” (p. 180). Regarding the connection between the two according to Chandieu, Van Raalte argues that it is to be understood as “theological and at the same time [*simul*] scholastically” (p. 197). He further elaborates:

His treatise aims to be both at once. All the scholastic method in the world without any theological grounding will have nothing substantial or true to say for theology. All the theological assertion in the world, grounded perhaps, yet unclearly argued, will only lead to confusion. One must start with indubitable theological grounds and then follow the rules of logic in valid analytical form; finally one ought to reach theological conclusions that can end controversy because they are correct by good and necessary consequence. Thus, “scholastic” is not an end in itself; rather, it serves as a tool to connect the conclusions back to their indubitable grounds (p. 197).

This summary arises from the fact that, for Chandieu, “theology is the Queen of the Sciences ... far above all the other sciences” and thus not “subject to the principles of philosophy” (p. 196). Because Scripture, as the source of theology, is clear and authoritative, “theologians should advance only conclusions that are certain, worthy of faith,” which, in turn, leads to the use of “analytical ... arguments” as they “deal in complete certainties, requiring undoubted premises” (p. 197). This brings Van Raalte to the question of the newness of Chandieu’s approach to which he concludes that there was nothing truly novel about his approach at this point though he does note that Chandieu does represent a turn to a more “pure” Aristotle (p. 202), which substantiates Van Raalte’s earlier arguments regarding Chandieu’s place in the intellectual history of his era.

In the seventh chapter, Van Raalte gives considerable attention to Chandieu’s *De Verbo dei Scripto* (1580), the first of his six “theological and scholastic” treatises. Here, Van Raalte has an eye to “Chandieu’s close adherence ... to an

intriguing disputational structure and his ... use of the hypothetical syllogism” (p. 205). A number of features arise from this exposition of *De Verbo dei Scripto*, which serve to support Van Raalte’s prior conclusions while offering further insight to be more fully explored in subsequent chapters. These include: (1) a method driven by his doctrine of Scripture; (2) the combination of loci method in theology with deductive reasoning; and (3) the conviction that faith, as grounded in Scripture, “must be firm and certain” (p. 236).

Diving deep into the scholastic waters, especially medieval scholasticism, Van Raalte discusses Chandieu’s methodology in relation to the medieval antecedent in the eighth chapter. He argues that Chandieu was likely employing the medieval *quaestiones disputatae* genre in the above mentioned ‘theological and scientific treatises,’ albeit with some improvements such as dependence on Scripture above philosophy and the treatment of “matters ... of fundamental importance to the Christian faith” (p. 257). Helpfully, Van Raalte surveys the features of Chandieu’s method from 1566 to 1580 as well as from 1580 to 1590. His method leading up to 1580 is essentially maintained with the addition of a “more finely tooled disputation” (p. 264). His mature methodology from 1580 onward shows essential continuity, with Chandieu’s use of hypothetical syllogisms standing in the foreground.

This unique employment of the hypothetical syllogism occupies Van Raalte’s attention in the penultimate chapter. Most striking is his conclusion that Chandieu’s use of the hypothetical syllogism for “arguments of certainty” is unparalleled by contemporaries, although Jacob Schneck may have been the inspiration for this. In this way, argues Van Raalte, he built on Aristotle without blindly adhering to him. The final chapter serves as a concluding chapter, summarizing much of what was discussed previously while taking pains to emphasize the importance of Chandieu for his era. Here, he agrees with others that Chandieu is one of the fathers of Reformed scholasticism, which he carefully nuances by asserting that “grandfathers and great-grandfathers” preceded him (p. 298).

Now that we have completed a survey of the book in question, some evaluation is in order. Early in this monograph, the author urges for careful historical theological study, and it is this very thing that he is diligent to provide. He displays a sober, thorough reading of Chandieu in light of his theological and pedagogical milieu. Indeed, as one progresses through the case which Van Raalte sets forth, it becomes evident that Chandieu was a significant figure of his time and that the lack of attention to this ‘silver horn’ of the Reformation has been to the detriment of students of this era. But, perhaps more importantly, this is a loss to the church as one thing becomes apparent about Chandieu: he was a churchly theologian. That is to say, he was concerned to defend the Reformed cause by his trenchant deployment of the scholastic method not due

to some aesthetic fancy but because of his conviction that the Reformed cause was in fact the biblical one and the rigorous logic served as an excellent instrument to get to the heart of truth in support of the Reformation. It is for this reason—Chandieu's love for and trust in God's word combined with a deeply logical mind and a heart for the church—that the church has been done a disservice by Chandieu's efforts on her behalf becoming obscured.

Additionally, Van Raalte presents a mature, nuanced understanding of the intellectual history to which Chandieu belongs. Throughout he is careful to avoid pitting humanism and scholasticism against each other; he is cognizant of the various Aristotelianisms of the day; and he goes to great lengths to help the reader avoid fallacies that occur in historical literature. Of particular note is Van Raalte's keen attention to the details of Chandieu's methodology, which in turn facilitates his ability to discern both areas of agreement and continuity that Chandieu shared with those who preceded him (e.g., Thomas Aquinas) and with his contemporaries (e.g., Melancthon), as well as unique contributions that he offered. This then makes evident that more attention ought to be given to Chandieu's role in the revival of a purer Aristotelianism and the turn to a Baroque scholasticism. For those who wish to understand these particular aspects of intellectual history, Van Raalte's study will be obligatory reading. In sum, Van Raalte has not only succeeded in bringing Chandieu out of obscurity as a *Reformed churchman*, but also as a *Reformed scholar and intellectual giant*.

Time and again Van Raalte makes it clear that in many ways the Reformed of Chandieu's time were an eclectic bunch. This is seen in their pedagogy, in their use of scholasticism while critiquing the medieval excesses, and in their combination of humanism (*ad fontes*) with scholastic method. This eclecticism was not birthed out of indecisiveness but out of a willingness to use whatever tools were necessary to further the health of the church and defend her against destructive errors. In this regard, Chandieu was no exception. It is clear by his facility for writing in multiple genres (e.g., poetry, sermon, treatise) that he did not relegate himself to the analytical method out of necessity, but he did so because he felt that logic summaries of theological arguments would serve the church to determine the truth of the matters under dispute. In this way, he and his Reformed contemporaries are a model to us. We ought to employ whatever tools we have at our disposal for the furtherance of truth, especially the truths found in Holy Writ.

As the reader may surmise, there is much to commend Van Raalte's monograph, and, as is likely also clear, there is not much to detract from its worth. We think one minor criticism would be helpful to note. In the beginning of this review, it was mentioned that only three works of Chandieu's have been

translated into English. Of the three, two are available online, with only one found in less antiquated English—*A Theological and Scholastical Treatise on the Spiritual Eating of the Body of Christ, and the Spiritual Drinking of His Blood, in the Holy Supper of the Lord*.<sup>1</sup> To begin the readers of this monograph's foray into Chandieu, we think it would have served them well if Van Raalte had given more sustained attention to *On the Spiritual Eating* in order to introduce the reader to a more accessible English translation of work by Chandieu. Now, we recognize that most advanced students of this era of historical theology are likely able readers of Latin (and French), yet, a treatment of this work would have had the additional benefit of strengthening Van Raalte's overall argument since *On the Spiritual Eating* was published in 1589 and, as such, is one of Chandieu's last works. Of course, not even a thorough and mature work of historical theology such as this one can cover all possible avenues, which is why we have designated this a minor criticism.

To conclude, this monograph of intellectual history, centered on the French Reformer, churchman and educator Antoine de Chandieu, is highly recommended for anyone interested in scholasticism, Reformation studies, Aristotle and his reception, or the relationship of theology to philosophy, to name but a few of the significant themes that have emerged. The reader will not just feed their intellectual curiosity, but, it is hoped by this reviewer, will also be encouraged by Chandieu's faith and commitment to Christ's church.

**Review:** J. V. Fesko, *Reforming Apologetics: Retrieving the Classic Reformed Approach to Defending the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019). ISBN 9780801098901. Paperback, 250 pp. \$24.99. Reviewed by Dr. Mark A. Herzer, pastor of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Warminster, Pennsylvania.

This book may be the proverbial shot across the bow in the Reformed apologetic world. J. V. Fesko lodges a frontal assault against the Van Tillian presuppositional hegemony. Fesko, who recently taught at Westminster Seminary California and currently teaches at Reformed Theological Seminary, is a Reformed theologian, but he believes Van Til and those like him have not been true to our Reformed heritage. It is this heritage that he wants to retrieve.

In this review, I want to accomplish three things. First, I will set forth Fesko's basic arguments as I give an overview

1. Antoine de la Riche Chandieu, *Theological and Scholastical Treatise, on the Spiritual Eating of the Body of Christ, and the Spiritual Drinking of His Blood, in the Holy Supper of the Lord* (London: Rivingtons, Waterloo Place, 1859), 5.

of the book. Second, I will offer what I believe are some of the strong points in the book and where I think he has substantively proven his case. Lastly, I will raise a few questions and concerns which I believe he created in his critique of Van Til. Overall, this well-written book will make the readers ponder and perhaps make them reconsider their own position. For most Reformed thinkers, this book will be deemed very provocative.

Fesko states in his introduction, “The goal of this essay is to retrieve the book of nature primarily for use in defending the faith, or apologetics” (p. 4). By “this essay” he means the entire book. He focuses on both “the innate and acquired knowledge of God.” These two things have been neglected and he believes that Van Til and other modern Reformed theologians have removed their importance from apologetics.

The first chapter explains the meaning of the “light of nature” in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1.1, 1.6, 10.4, 20.4, 21.1) and surveys its meaning in writers like Anthony Burgess (a Westminster divine), Lambert Daneau, John Downame, Pierre Du Moulin, John Arrowsmith, etc. He gives the majority of his time to Burgess, who wrote quite extensively on the topic. Light of nature includes “common knowledge among believers and unbelievers” (p. 18). All of these men believe in “common notions.” Fesko shows that Burgess and others included conscience, natural law, and human reason under the rubric of the light of nature. Regarding reason, he says, “Scripture provides truth and reason hammers it for greater understanding” (pp. 22–23). Citing Burgess, he says the light of nature (reason) is a “hand-maid” and not “a mistress” (p. 23). In the end, Fesko asks why divines like Burgess gave greater weight to the light of nature than our twentieth century theologians. He believes Reformed theologians and philosophers performed a grave disservice to the church by identifying “common notions,” or the light of nature, with Roman Catholicism. He concludes the chapter by saying, “the light of nature had a greater function than merely rendering fallen humanity inexcusable before the divine bar of judgment” (p. 26).

Fesko rigorously addresses the subject of “common notions” in his second chapter. Using Burgess to exegete Romans 2:14–15, he quotes him as saying, “The Law of Nature consists in those common notions which are ingrafted in all men’s hearts...” (p. 30). Common notions, says Burgess, was not obliterated from the heart after the fall. Fesko carefully shows how Thomas Aquinas held to the same view: “there is little variation between Aquinas and later Reformed theologians” (p. 33). He supports his view by citing Melancthon, Calvin, Zanchius, Junius, the Leiden Synopsis, the Synod of Dordt, Turretin, Gillespie, etc. Furthermore, he argues that “common notions” did not differ from the view of “the light of nature” in the Westminster Confession of Faith (pp. 33–39). He concludes this chapter by stating that “common notions

were a noncontroversial feature of early modern Reformed theology.” He adds to the list other weighty theologians like Witsius, Picquet, de Moor, Charles Hodge, and even Bavinck (though he will later take issue with him on a different topic). One cannot get around the overwhelming testimony Fesko offers and not conclude that common notions dominated the thought of most Reformed theologians.

Not surprisingly, he gives to Calvin the whole of his third chapter. Fesko contends that Van Til erred in his understanding of Calvin (his view of common notions and his relationship to scholasticism). Both Dooyeweerd and Barth receive criticism for the way they interpreted Calvin. In some sense, Fesko argues against the old “Calvin against the Calvinists” in this chapter. Also, as current scholarship has already shown, Fesko repeats the argument that continuity existed between Calvin and scholasticism. Using various sources from Calvin’s writings, Fesko demonstrates that Calvin taught his form of common notions as well as arguments for God’s existence. In short, “Calvin, therefore, stands in continuity with the catholic tradition on common notions and their connections to the order of nature and the Reformed Orthodox use of these concepts” (p. 68).

In chapter four, Fesko interestingly devotes a lot of energy to defend Thomas Aquinas. The author argues that Van Til criticized Aquinas for synthetic thinking (a charge that will be turned on Van Til later on). But Fesko believes Van Til did not interpret Aquinas accurately. In fact, Fesko presents one of the most scathing and embarrassing critiques against Van Til’s reading and understanding of Thomas Aquinas. He argues that Van Til’s understanding of Aquinas seems to have been almost entirely dependent upon secondary sources. He shows how Van Til rarely directly cited Thomas Aquinas. Perhaps to the astonishment of Van Tillians, Fesko goes so far as to argue that Van Til and Aquinas had more in common than first believed. Aquinas never offered the proofs for God’s existence as a foundation but as a confirmation “and such a claim was ultimately for the sake and benefit of faith” (p. 75). This has the added support of Richard Muller’s own research. Aquinas, Fesko argues, believed that reason “answers objections and clarifies revealed truth.” He cites Thomas Aquinas as saying that only Scripture provides “incontrovertible proof” (p. 77). Scripture and not “raw reason” was Aquinas’s foundation. Aquinas “argues from the presupposition of faith” just like Van Til (p. 87). Fesko rightly places Aquinas in the Augustinian and Anselmian school of thought of *fides quaerens intellectum*. For that reason, Aquinas cannot be viewed as giving “raw reason” an independence from Scripture. Fesko carefully explains three reasons why he believes Van Til misread Aquinas (pp. 81–93). Those pages present a fascinating interpretation of Thomas Aquinas. He seems to have carefully studied Aquinas and is conversant with some of the Thomistic trends. In the end, rather than

seeing Aquinas in terms of Nature and Grace (pitting the two against each other), grace perfects and consummates nature (pp. 77, 94). Aquinas was readily and approvingly used by many Reformed theologians and Fesko therefore believes Aquinas should not be relegated to Catholicism.

I believe the most consequential chapter has to be Fesko's fifth chapter in which he tackles worldviews. I will summarize his main contention and will revisit this section at the end of the review. The "historic worldview theory" (HWT) Fesko argues, emerged on account of philosophic idealism. This idealism was one of the reasons for jettisoning the book of nature. James Orr, Abraham Kuyper and Van Til believed that there was no common doctrine of man or anything because each worldview was mutually exclusive of each other (he gave essentially no attention to Gordon Clark). Fesko believes that HWT contradicts Scripture because "it rejects a common doctrine of humanity" (p. 98). I believe he convincingly demonstrated how the HWT was a child of German idealism in which a worldview was deduced from a single presupposition or principle (starting point). Gratifying to read in this chapter was the amount of attention he gave to James Orr and his book *The Christian View of God and the World: As Centering in the Incarnation*, because not enough authors have given him enough credit (though Fesko did not do it approvingly). Fesko vigorously argues that Van Til's starting point of "the self-attesting Christ of Scripture" diminished the importance of the book of nature. He also shows the inherent tension in Van Til's denial of "common notions" while embracing a "common ground" a believer has with an unbeliever on account of common grace. Here Fesko believes Van Til differs very little from the historic Reformed and catholic understanding of common notions. Fesko also raises serious questions against Scott Oliphint and believes he misread some of the sources he cited (pp. 115–120). Fesko furthermore does not believe that the Bible offers an "exhaustively comprehensive" source of all knowledge (p. 127) and therefore it would be wrong to have a "distinct Christian view of everything" (p. 128). He adds, "I believe one of the key problems with HWT is that it seeks to deduce an exhaustive understanding of reality from one principle" (p. 131). Again, we will come back to this chapter.

Fesko analyzes the transcendental arguments in chapter six. He shows Kant's influence in the transcendental argument for the existence of God (TAG). Van Til himself did not escape synthetic thought in which he combined pagan and Christian thoughts. This is one of the ironies of Van Til's apologetic enterprise. In the course of this chapter, Fesko argues that coherence theory of truth (as in TAG) should be combined with the correspondence theory (corresponds to the way things are, e.g., the book of nature). But he says TAG avoids the corresponding reality (i.e., evidences, though not entirely). TAG employed synthetic thinking and we must

simply accept this fact from a historical standpoint. Fesko warns, "Whoever claims to be purely biblical and free from human opinions might actually be the slave of a defunct philosopher or theologian" (p. 156). Van Til, like most other theologians, did not escape the philosophy of his times. I found myself quite amused when I read, "Just as we must be cautious regarding Greeks bearing gifts and giving too much credence to the abilities of human reason, we must conversely be leery of Germans bearing gifts lest we give too little consideration to the book of nature" (p. 154). One can find other sentences like that in the book. For example, "But for some reason, Van Til took a weed whacker to Aquinas's Aristotelian garden and nurtured his Kantian one" (p. 149). Fesko ends the chapter by asserting that Van Til's TAG did not bring a Copernican revolution to apologetics (pp. 7, 136, 157).

The seventh chapter primarily deals with Dooyeweerd's dualism. In brief, Fesko believes making a distinction between things like nature and grace, heaven and earth, etc., does not mean the person espoused scholasticism. Dooyeweerd believed Roman Catholicism and Greek thought suffered under dualism. Making distinctions, Fesko argues, does not mean the person embraced dualism. "Dualism critique rests on an inaccurate evaluation of the historical evidence" (p. 164).

The last and final chapter presents the author's vision on how we can use the book of nature in defending the faith. Fesko fears that Christians make too many absolute claims and "unwittingly" give "the unbeliever an extra intellectual obstacle." His general thrust for apologetics can be found in the following sentence, "If, on the other hand, Christians refuse to attach the adjective *biblical* to anything except what the Scriptures truly address, then they are less likely to set themselves up unnecessarily for failure" (p. 218). Though this legitimate concern should not be discounted, I suspect this point does not constitute the biggest problem in the church. This is a suggestive chapter but not the most helpful one in the book. He will need to expand upon it.

This book is what *Classical Apologetics* (by Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley) wanted to be. Fesko single-handedly made a case for *Classical Apologetics*. He has convincingly proved that common notions always had a place in Reformed Theology. Those who have read deeply in seventeenth century literature will admit that Fesko has established his point. In keeping with his own title, he has ably retrieved the classic reformed approach to defending the faith, at least in historical terms. No one can say that the Van Tillian method is the only true reformed approach in historical terms since Van Til deviated from the earlier Reformed tradition (if we can speak of such a unity of thought within our Reformed heritage). Van Til's view is the new kid on the block. When one has the likes of Richard Muller and Paul Helm concurring and recommending Fesko's book, one should be leery of declaring that Fesko got

it all wrong. At least in historical terms, Fesko has gained the advantage. Perhaps rather than making Van Til and the early Reformed perspective mutually exclusive (which Fesko borders on doing), it would be better to argue that Van Til either improved and perfected our tradition or simply supplemented it. Do we have to reject one for the other?

Furthermore, no reader somewhat cognizant of the historic philosophical positions will deny that Van Til's TAG looks very much like Kant clothed in Christian terms. Van Til's synthetic thought should no longer remain a debate. The only question should be over its biblical fidelity. Is the older Reformed method more true to Scripture or not? Can we have a place for both methods? We all know Van Til did not deny the use of evidences per se and perhaps we could reach a happy rapprochement in this area? Does faulting Van Til for using Kant discount his contribution? Surely not!

Though this book was one of the more stimulating books I've read in a long time, I remain unconvinced that we need to discard the worldview theories (HWT) Fesko pummeled in chapter five. Fesko's overall concern is to give some place to the book of nature and he believes HWT claimed too much, namely, "there is a unique Christian view of everything" (p. 129). I believe it is here Fesko falls into the very same problem he convincingly lodged against Van Til. HWT made other worldviews mutually exclusive and it offered no room for the book of nature. But must we dispense with HWT so as to give a place for the book of nature? Is it not true that a Christian's mind suffused with God's revelation will lead a Christian to have a unique perspective on "men and things" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16, 17)? We might not be able to establish what "Christian art" is but we cannot deny that a Christian's view of art will differ fundamentally and foundationally from an unbeliever's. HWT should not be thrown out because it has been a helpful tool and continues to be. In Fesko's zeal to find a connection with the surrounding world and to moderate the antithesis in HWT, I think he made too much of a connection between the Code of Hammurabi and Mosaic Covenant (p. 128). Admittedly the church has always struggled with the radical Anthonasian *Contra Mundum* perspective, but we must not mute all the forms of antithesis which Fesko's effort almost seems to court.

Some books can frustrate the reader and many authors fail to write clearly. John Fesko did an admirable job in avoiding either of these pitfalls. Though the topics he handled could be deemed complex and difficult, Fesko tackled them with clarity and made the issues very accessible. His is a well-written book and a pleasure to read. Not all readers will find him convincing and many of us who have been influenced by Van Til might find Fesko's book extremely alarming and too provocative, yet this is a needful and helpful debate and one that has been long overdue.

**Review:** Daniel Ritchie, *Isaac Nelson: Radical Abolitionist, Evangelical Presbyterian, and Irish Nationalist* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018). ISBN 9781786941282. Pp. 325+x. Reviewed by Dr. Alan D. Strange.

Dr. Ritchie, in this published version of his dissertation from Liverpool, has given us a careful and nuanced portrayal of Isaac Nelson (1809–1888), a prominent Irish Presbyterian pastor. During his ministerial career in Belfast (at Donegall Street Presbyterian Church), Nelson played a part in many of the leading issues of his time. The role that he played, however, tended not to be in step with that day, but responding to and arguing against the tenor of his times, even seeming sometimes ahead of his time. One might wonder why Ritchie chose someone so at odds with many of his fellow churchmen. I think it a reasonable, if not brilliant, choice, because Nelson, though customarily marching to a different drummer, had involvement in leading events impacting the nineteenth century church and state in Ireland. Ritchie, employing Nelson as a bit of a foil, uses his life and work to cast a clearer light on the issues of the day and thus to furnish us with a clearly defined portrait of mid and late nineteenth century Ulster Presbyterianism and beyond.

Ritchie supports his findings and conclusions with careful research that deftly mines a plethora of primary sources and the best and most relevant secondary sources. One particular challenge in writing on Nelson is, given the access to the papers of so many others of the time, Ritchie had no access to Nelson's private papers. Since there is no known collection of his papers, historians must rely on his comparatively scanty public writings and the assessments of contemporaries. The archival lack of such first-person access to Nelson is lamentable, though Ritchie's skillful navigation of the sources to which he did have access ameliorates the absence of Nelson's papers.

This well-written book appreciates Nelson but is also critical of him. Ritchie resists the temptation that must attend a historical figure like Nelson: he does not psychologize the pastor in an effort to figure out what contributed to his routinely acting as a curmudgeon. Rather, he calmly assesses all resources that he can gather and arrives at sober conclusions about Nelson. That Nelson was rather irascible seems evident from the sources and Ritchie does not attempt to hide it, though he always seems fair and sympathetic to Nelson.

It is interesting to this reviewer, and makes him wonder if this figured into Nelson's discontent: Nelson seemed especially interested in political questions all through his ministry, ultimately sidelining full-time pastoral ministry for elected service in Parliament. This reviewer thinks that Nelson might have been too concerned about this world and that such ulterior interests robbed him of the peace that comes to those who keep before them the heavenly character of their treasure.

Perhaps that's just psychologizing on my part, but as one who's done much work on the spirituality of the church, I think that Nelson could have used a healthy dose of it (though he was quite critical of the Free Church of Scotland, which thoroughly imbibed the doctrine of the spiritual independency of the church).

Ritchie explores Nelson's life and beliefs to illumine important issues on the larger stage both in Ireland and internationally. Nelson was an ardent abolitionist and Ritchie examines how this honorable conviction led him to harsh criticism of would-be theological allies and to make common cause with secularists who were enemies of Christianity. Nelson also was a staunch opponent of the Northern Irish revivals of 1859, because, at least in part, of their alliance with like revivals in America (thus allied in some sense with slavery, with which Nelson associated the American church, largely). And lastly, Nelson became a partisan of Irish Home Rule, even championing Charles Parnell's cause in a rather misguided political career in the British Parliament.

The first chapter furnishes the obligatory background information, including family and education, in which we are introduced to Nelson as a protégé of Henry Cooke. That he will be willing to differ from him, and other elders, is early evidence of Nelson's being his own man. We see that Nelson was strongly evangelical and broadly a supporter of the Westminster Standards, quite capable intellectual and willing, even as a young man, "to challenge authority figures" (40). Ritchie proceeds to three extended chapters that comprise the rest of the book (not including data sources, the fifty plus page excellent bibliography being chief among them).

The first of these three chapters that comprise the heart of the book is entitled after a Nelson descriptor: "The Eloquent and Fearless Friend of the Slave." Nelson was a fervent and relentless opponent of the evil of slavery. He saw it as a violation of the law of God against man-stealing and abhorred the notion that one man could have property in another, as if that man were a thing, not a fellow creature in the image of God. He condemned chattel slavery repeatedly and eloquently, arguing that African slavery was not what was ever described in the Bible and that those who defended the slavery of that day from the Bible were ignorant or malevolent. His opposition remained so trenchant that he alienated some of his fellows in the PCI, all of whom were anti-slavery, but sometimes not sufficiently so for Nelson.

Nelson insisted on a sort of double separationism: not only was it wrong for a communion (like the PCUSA) to admit slaveholders to the Table but it was also wrong for a communion like the Free Church of Scotland, which barred slaveholders, to have fellowship with those who did not bar them. The Free Church had been founded in the Disruption of 1843, needed money for churches and manses, and received

such from some American Presbyterian churches. Because these American churches did not bar slaveholders from the Lord's Table, Nelson and others in the PCI launched a "Send the Money Back" campaign, arguing that the FCS should not accept such tainted blood money. Nelson further alienated fellow churchmen by welcoming not only Frederick Douglass but William Lloyd Garrison, men certainly not confessionalists or orthodox, when, at the same time, Nelson would not tolerate Free Church leaders like Thomas Chalmers or William Cunningham, whom he regarded as insufficiently abolitionist.

Charles Hodge, the great PCUSA theologian at Princeton, who was an emancipationist, abhorred abolitionism because he believed that its practitioners were monomaniacal, obsessed with ending slavery at all costs, including the destruction of the American nation, and, if necessary, the church in the United States. From an American viewpoint, Nelson looked like one of those abolitionists that so many otherwise sound American churchmen feared and abominated. Nelson continued to support someone as radical as Garrison even after Douglass broke company with Garrison. Douglass could no longer abide Garrison, who called the U.S. Constitution a "pact with the devil" and called for free states to leave the union. It did seem, as Hodge and others depicted these men, that American abolitionists were radicals willing to destroy all to destroy slavery. Though the Free Church of Scotland and the PCI wrote well-known, public letters upbraiding the PCUSA for its tolerance of slavery, this was not enough for Nelson and the most fervent Irish abolitionists: they wanted these Scottish and Irish churches to have no fellowship with a church that welcomed the slaveholder to the Table of the Lord.

The second chapter of the three crucial chapters of the book chronicles Nelson's opposition to the 1859 revival in Ireland. If a commitment to abolitionism that many may have regarded as overweening put Nelson out of step with fellow PCI churchmen, his opposition to this revival did so even more. What was regarded as an *annus mirabilis* by so many (William Gibson's official history called 1859 *A Year of Grace*), Nelson labelled a *Year of Delusion* in his critical review of Gibson's book. To this day, Ulster Presbyterianism tends to regard that revival, in spite of its typical revival excesses ("prostrations," relentless "inspired" lay preaching, etc.), as genuine if not paradigmatic. Nelson was suspicious of its potential American origins, tending to regard anything from America as spurious. Americans, Nelson believed, brandished their religiosity while keeping their slaves enchained, or tolerating slavery. Americans sought, in a variety of ways, to salve their consciences over slavery: revivalism was one of those ways and Nelson wanted no part of being complicit with such self-justification. He also opposed the revival on what in other contexts might be called Old Side grounds. He felt that the Revival undermined the church and the ordinary

means of grace, stressing dubious religious experience at the expense of sound doctrine, government, discipline and liturgy.

The last main chapter treats Nelson's championing of Irish "Home rule" and land reform that would result in peasant proprietorship. As a part of this radical agenda, certainly so for an Ulster Presbyterian, Nelson became a member of the British Parliament. His fellow Westminster parliamentarians considered both his causes and his speeches for them something of a joke. Ritchie rather pathetically describes an occasion on which the Speaker ejected him from the House of Commons and the officials thereof had forcibly to drag him out. Ritchie notes that he might have better tended the affairs of his parish and broader church than ineffectually serve in this way. Ritchie also points out that over the course of time the church of which he was pastor in Belfast dramatically declined in attendance and threatened to vanish altogether. Nelson's ministrations were apparently ineffectual and it seems likely that his congregation was alienated by his devotion to causes and principles that either they did not share or care about. Nelson was devoted to Scottish Common Sense Realism, Lockean republicanism, something close to Voluntarism (and other departures from strict confessionalism, including questioning the pope as Antichrist), all as a part of his support of Home Rule and Land Reform.

What this reviewer finds richly ironic here is that Nelson confessionally moved in the direction of the American revisions to the Standards, as well as embracing republicanism politically (another "American-like" move). He abominated slavery more than anything, though, and this likely shaped him more than anything, and may have been the chief reason for his opposition to the revival of 1859. Oddly, though, he did not support the North in the U.S. Civil War, seeing them as insufficiently abolitionist and believing that the South had every right to self-determination, though he hated her slavery. Perhaps he saw Irish home rule in the same light: he wanted Irish independence and was willing to grant it to any others, even arguing that the lack of an Irish parliament meant that England had reduced Ireland to slavery. Nelson certainly appears as an unyielding champion of freedom.

Some accused him and his fellows of socialism and even communism with respect to his views on land reform but he strongly refuted those charges. Though he did not think that the church should be over the state or the opposite, he not only believed that religion should impact all of life, but he also seemed to think that he had rather direct biblical warrant for his political views. He defended his Irish home rule principles by claiming that "by seeking self-government ... I am promoting the cause of true religion." He did tie in his Presbyterianism with his republicanism and was decidedly "of the opinion that theologians and clerics could not remain indifferent on key social questions such as land reform and

legislative independence." The notion that theologians should not interfere in such issues, Nelson believed, "was the type of piety condemned by the parable of the Good Samaritan" (245).

Ritchie argues that Nelson was "not untypical" of Presbyterians of his day "regarding supporting abolitionism, theological orthodoxy, and socio-political justice in Ireland." When it came to "attacking the Free Church [for being insufficiently opposed to slavery—Nelson's chief trait], denouncing the 1859 revival as delusional, and advocating home rule" (254), Nelson was not a typical Ulster Presbyterian of his time. He was involved, though, and often quite immersed, in the great issues of his day, and Ritchie's vivid portrait of him not only illumines the man but also the times in which he lived, in church, state, and societal concerns. We are grateful for the skill that Dr. Ritchie ably employs and with which he paints Isaac Nelson in context.

**Review: *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, edited by J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017). ISBN 9781433552861. Hardback, 1007 pp. \$60.00. Reviewed by Adrian C. Keister (Ph.D. in Mathematical Physics, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University).**

People do science. People are biased. Bias can impede science if scientists don't mitigate their own biases. One of the best ways to mitigate your own bias is to explain clearly what your bias is.

I am a Young Earth Creationist (YEC); I was a YEC before I read *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (abbr. *TE:SPTC*), and I am a YEC still; if anything, I am a stronger one than before because of the many excellent arguments put forth in this book. Few, if any, of the contributors to this massive volume (roughly 1000 pages) are YEC, and yet the arguments against evolution and theistic evolution in this book are so strong that they should make the most hardened atheistic evolutionist pause. The reader should also note that I received a free copy of this book from Crossway to review, and I am not required to give any specific kind of feedback. My background is in mathematical physics; while I am no biologist, I certainly do understand the scientific method and can follow scientific arguments.

There is one point I would like to clear up at the start. Many readers will be familiar with the Eternal Subordination of the Son controversy, of which Wayne Grudem is at the epicenter. I did not detect such doctrine in any of Grudem's writings in this book—I was on the alert for it.

I was pleased to see that the science portion critiqued macroevolution as a whole. Several reviewers, including

responders at BioLogos such as Deborah Haarsma,<sup>1</sup> have interpreted *TE:SPTC* as primarily directed at BioLogos. I disagree. BioLogos is mentioned twice as often in the philosophy and theology sections as in the science section. Moreover, in the science section when BioLogos is mentioned, it tends to be rather incidental than directly targeted. You might be able to interpret the philosophy and theology sections as more targeted against BioLogos, but I do not see that the science section is so.

I will outline several of the arguments I found more forceful, and one should not infer that any chapter I do not include in my review is not worth reading. I learned something in every chapter. As a general outline of the book, Chapters 1–9 constitute “Science Part 1: Macroevolution in General,” Chapters 10–17 are “Science Part 2: Universal Common Descent,” Chapters 18–26 are “Philosophy,” and Chapters 27–31 are “Theology.”

I found “Chapter 7: Why DNA Mutations Cannot Accomplish What Neo-Darwinism Requires,” by Jonathan Wells, to be among the most compelling arguments in the science section—indeed, in the entire book. To summarize this chapter’s argument, know that the so-called “central dogma” of molecular biology is that DNA makes RNA makes protein makes us. What Wells accomplishes in this chapter is to show that none of those transitions are possible without a great deal more information. That is, DNA does not contain sufficient information to make RNA, RNA does not contain sufficient information to make protein, and protein does not contain sufficient information to make us. Every step in the central dogma fails, because every step requires a great deal more information, what Wells calls “epigenetics.” Neo-Darwinism says that natural selection acting on random mutations produces all the life we see around us. But mutations in what? The DNA. As Richard Dawkins has said many times, “It’s all in the DNA.” Wells shows that Dawkins is quite wrong here: there is a lot more to it than the DNA. One kind of information of particular interest is spatial information: every protein in a cell needs to know exactly where it is supposed to go. This is 3D information, unlike DNA, which is 1D information. That is, the spatial information required is absolutely enormous. Also, the way proteins fold is not determined by RNA, the “previous step,” but is affected by many factors. RNA splicing and editing are two processes that illustrate how DNA by itself contains insufficient information to make RNA. That is, one DNA could make many different RNAs. How could natural selection acting on random mutations, even if adapted to this other kind of information, account for the coordinated evolution of information? All the information in the DNA as well as the spatial information, is coordinated. If not, the cell would not function. Unfortunately, Wells does not argue his point all the way home: all this extra information required for

cell function is unaffected by natural selection and random mutations. This poses a severe problem for Neo-Darwinism. To be clear, the problem at hand is that natural selection acting on random mutations is not capable of making the coordinated changes required for all of the epigenetic information to update at once, as would be required for a beneficial change.

BioLogos, the theistic evolution vanguard website, has almost no information on epigenetics. The only mention of protein folds, for example, is an article by Dennis Venema<sup>2</sup> arguing that the process of evolution can produce new protein folds. Incidentally, *TE:SPTC* interacts with that article starting on page 131, an interaction to which BioLogos has not responded. The word “epigenetics” does not appear on the BioLogos website, nor does the term “RNA splice,” “RNA edit,” or the word “spatial.” I conclude from this informal survey that BioLogos has not interacted with Wells’s argument.

Other chapters I found convincing, though perhaps not so strongly as Wells’s chapter, were anything by Stephen Meyer (Chapters 2, 6, 8, 10, and 19—the last two moving into the philosophy section). As Meyer has been involved with the Discovery Institute for some time and has debated many people, naturally what he writes has been battled back and forth, including with BioLogos.<sup>3</sup>

Chapters 8 and 9 both touch on an important problem point for the theory of evolution: body plans. Body plans have to be an orchestrated development, or it will inevitably kill the organism. The problem is that mutations producing major body plan changes are invariably lethal, as shown in many experiment studies, whereas mutations producing minor body plan changes that are not lethal always happen later in the development. That is, mutations are either major but not viable, or they are viable but not major. There is therefore *no understood mechanism* by which any line of organisms can develop a new body plan. Many evolutionists have produced theories to explain new body plans, but as especially Chapter 8 illustrates (a long and complicated chapter), these theories might be *major*, but they are not *viable*.

Part 2 of the Science section critiqued the theory of Universal Common Descent (UCD). While certainly worth reading particularly in light of its examination of the fossil record, it was of less interest to me and I will say very little about it. I thought the section did succeed in showing that UCD is not a viable theory compared with the evidence. One aspect of UCD oddly absent from *TE:SPTC* was any mention of a

1. See “A Flawed Mirror: A Response to the Book ‘Theistic Evolution’” (accessed on 6/9/2019 at <https://biologos.org/articles/a-flawed-mirror-a-response-to-the-book-theistic-evolution>).

2. See “Intelligent Design and Nylon-Eating Bacteria” (accessed on 6/23/2019 at <https://biologos.org/articles/intelligent-design-and-nylon-eating-bacteria>).

3. See “A Flawed Mirror”.

possible identification of the first human beings in UCD with Adam and Eve. That is, the theory of evolution posits that there was a time when humans did not exist, but now they do. Therefore, there must have been beings that we could label the first human beings. Why not call them Adam and Eve? I am arguing, of course, as a devil's advocate. I was puzzled as to why theistic evolutionists go to such great lengths to regard Adam and Eve as non-historical, because according to theistic evolutionists, there would have had to be thousands of humans on the planet at the time of Adam and Eve. Very well, let us grant that. Have we not just pushed the problem back in time? Surely there would have to be "first humans" at some point!

One chapter I found especially enjoyable to read, though it was not in the line of direct argumentation against macroevolution or Universal Common Descent, was "Chapter 17: Pressure to Conform Leads to Bias in Science," by Christopher Shaw. This chapter essentially knocks the feet out from under science-as-an-idol, a move which is long overdue. Shaw shows that the typical path followed in order to obtain a tenure-track position in science in a major university is so complicated, stringent, and competitive, that anyone who succeeds is highly unlikely to do anything to jeopardize his position. Such people are not free thinkers. In addition, funding sources highly bias towards the status quo, usually eschewing unconventional projects which are the most likely to innovate. The peer-review process, while it is the best we have, is seriously flawed as well, again tending to reinforce currently established science at the expense of new ideas. There is a replication crisis, well-known in the scientific community for some time. This issue is well worth explaining to readers. The problem is that results confirming the results of others are not usually publishable in most journals because they are not new. If the mantra in the university is "publish or perish" (which it is), this is a problem. No one will take the time and effort to reproduce anyone else's work, which in turn leads to the reproducibility crisis. There are some related statistical issues as well which I need not get into; but the reader should definitely be aware that the scientific method is far from perfect, and it never arrives at truth, though it undoubtedly should be aiming for it. There are serious systemic problems with the way scientists do science, and these problems lead to epistemological questions such as, "Why should we trust science at all?" I certainly would not argue that people should not do science, or that it is not worthwhile. However, I would certainly call for a return to good science!

The philosophy section was important, but I thought a history of the fact/value distinction would have put it into context better. I would trace this distinction back to Immanuel Kant responding to David Hume's skepticism. Hume was an empiricist: the only things that exist are the things you can

perceive with the senses—philosophical materialism. Kant wanted to rebut Hume's skepticism about the supernatural, but the way he did it was to put a divide between the things you can sense (the Phenomenal) and the things you cannot (the Noumenal). Kant argued that the methods you use to investigate these two realms are completely disjoint. Unfortunately, this divide of Kant's has created a fracture in the perception of truth itself, as if the scientific world and the non-scientific world have nothing to say to each other. Francis Schaeffer and Nancy Pearcey, in their respective works *Escape from Reason* and *Total Truth*, have illustrated how to bridge that divide once again to reclaim one truth. Given that God is simple, and that truth is one of God's attributes, truth must be one!

It is in this context that *TE:SPTC* critiques methodological naturalism (abbr. MN). Now MN is different from philosophical naturalism, which is Hume's philosophy. MN does not claim that there *is* no supernatural. MN merely says that when you are investigating the natural, you must restrict your inquiries to the natural. You are not permitted to admit supernatural explanations of natural phenomena. But is this wise? I am reminded of the famous story (possibly apocryphal) of Laplace versus Lagrange and Napoleon. Laplace had just written his *magnum opus*, *Mécanique Céleste*, which made no mention of God (at the time, this was unusual!) Napoleon mentioned this to Laplace, who replied, "I have no need of that hypothesis!" Lagrange, when he heard of this interaction, took quite a different stance when he said, "Ah, but that is a fine hypothesis! It explains so much!"

It is precisely that question that persists, and which the philosophy section answers according to Lagrange, and not according to Laplace.

One of the more interesting aspects brought out in the Philosophy section was in "Chapter 19: Should Theistic Evolution Depend on Methodological Naturalism?" Meyer and Nelson spend some time talking about the definition of science—not an easy topic at all, and much debated. One thing they point out is that however we define science, it should be the same across the board. Meyer has found that there is an unexpected equivalence between materialistic and design-based theories with respect to their ability to meet demarcation criteria (that is, criteria to determine what is science and what is not science). Either materialistic and design-based theories *both pass* certain criteria, or they *both fail* certain criteria. The implications are especially important for opponents of Intelligent Design (abbr. ID). Suppose you claim that ID is not scientific. Well then, if you believe in MN, you may not utilize any scientific arguments to discredit ID. On the other hand, if you disbelieve in ID and use scientific arguments to try to dismantle it, you are implicitly saying that ID is a scientific theory, at least according to whatever demarcation criteria you use. Meyer is saying that you cannot have it both ways: either

materialistic theories and ID are both scientific theories, or they are both non-scientific theories. Dilley fleshes this out a bit more in “Chapter 20: How to Lose a Battleship: Why Methodological Naturalism Sinks Theistic Evolution,” which I would strongly commend to your attention. He shows how acceptance of MN renders most of the TE arguments impotent.

In Chapter 24, Colin Reeves brings out an important point I would like to call to your attention. As mentioned before, since God is simple, and truth is an attribute of God, truth is simple. God is utterly logical and without contradictions in any of his thinking. Therefore, no properly interpreted truth revealed in Scripture can in principle contradict any properly interpreted finding of science. God is the author of special and general revelation. However, that certainly does not rule out a conflict between Scripture viewed as authoritative, sufficient, inerrant, and perspicuous, versus the scientific way of doing things that always trumps Scripture. As Gordon Clark said, “Science is a collection of useful falsehoods.” That is, its inductive method is inherently a fallacy, and cannot arrive at truth with 100% certainty. However, the Scriptures are inerrant, inspired, and infallible. They are God’s word, and therefore true. It follows that the certainty we have in Scripture is far greater than any we will ever have in science. So what happens when a finding of science appears to contradict Scripture? Well, there is certainly nothing wrong with re-examining our interpretation of Scripture: we can be wrong. I would argue, however, that the science should be suspected first, particularly given its track record. Reeves shows in this chapter that Francis Bacon espoused the opposite view, that science is the key to Scripture, not the reverse. The Bacon approach certainly seems to be dominant today, and this should not be. Reeves rightly points to the noetic effect of sin, and how it blinds us. The fact is, we are on far safer ground in the Scriptures than we are in science.

Of the theology section chapters, I found Chapter 28 by John Currid to be the most persuasive, although they all had something valuable to give. Currid shows how TE is incompatible with the Old Testament (OT). This, of course, is at the crux of the entire debate, so do not miss this chapter!

I would like to add an aside before discussing Currid’s chapter. The young earth creationists, such as myself, would say that God created the universe *ex nihilo* roughly 10,000 years ago with the appearance of some age, and that he did not use any macroevolutionary process to do so. There is an area of mathematics called semi-group theory that shows that no one can disprove the theory of mature creation. The argument goes like this: suppose you have a system that starts at state A, changes in time to state B, and finally stops at state C. Then, suppose you have the identical system start at B and stop at C. Semi-group theory says that if you are inside the system, and have no outside knowledge or memory, *there is*

*no way tell which history is true!* Therefore, science cannot disprove mature creation.

At this point, the atheist would counter with a charge of “Last Thursday-ism.” This is the notion that God created the universe “last Thursday,” and no-one can disprove it. Since this simply seems preposterous, the atheist claims he has countered mature creation. Aside from the fact that, technically, he has done nothing of the kind, we can counter “Last Thursday-ism” very easily: we do have outside knowledge revealed to us in Scripture! We have a history of the origin of the universe which, if true, certainly rules out any notion of God creating the universe last Thursday. Without the Holy Spirit working in anyone’s heart, he will not accept the Scriptures as true; therefore, this argument might not persuade the atheist of its truth. However, he must admit that it provides a robust counter to Last Thursday-ism within the Christian worldview.

Back to Currid. Currid explains five models that TEs have put forth to explain how Genesis 1–3 can be interpreted as consistent with TE. These are the functional model, Genesis 1–3 as myth, figurative and allegorical literature, the sequential scheme, and etiology as methodology. Currid methodically punctures all of these.

The functional model says that Genesis 1–3 is about functions, not origins. John Walton, for example, argues that Genesis 1–3 is concerned about functions (Currid agrees with this), but goes further to say that *therefore* it is not about origins (Currid denies this). Those familiar with OT studies will not be surprised to hear that the characterization of Genesis 1–3 as an Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) text has a lot to do with Walton’s argument. Currid successfully defends against this common mischaracterization. While Genesis certainly has some similarities with other ANE texts, they are by no means sufficient to support the impressive array of conclusions some scholars draw!

In considering Genesis 1–3 as myth, Currid interacts with Peter Enns. This is a standard position among liberal OT scholars. The question to raise here is “Why does Genesis 1–3 have so many hallmarks of historical narrative if it is a myth?” Some might say that those hallmarks are there as a process of “demythologization.” But if so, how can they be sure it originated with a myth? The polemical nature of Genesis would argue against this.

Probably the most important aspect of this chapter is the debate about the alleged figurative nature of Genesis 1–3. Currid argues, and I would completely agree with him, that Genesis 1–3 bears all the hallmarks of historical narrative such as the waw-consecutive combined with imperfect tense verbs (quite rare in Hebrew poetry), and the  $\text{N}^{\text{N}}$  direct object marker (also quite rare in Hebrew poetry). While it is highly structured, that does not rule out historical narrative. Moreover, other Scriptures regard Genesis 1–3 as historical.

The sequential scheme is trying to answer the question of how Genesis 1:1--2:3 relates to Genesis 2:4--3:24. There are several options: the conservative position (retelling), the compete position (liberal view), and a so-called third way: the sequential scheme. The idea here is that the second section is a sequential following of the first section. Walton proposes this scheme, but there are a number of objections which Currid outlines.

Etiology means to explain something's existence. Some interpret Genesis as etiology, and pivot on that idea to reject the historical nature of Genesis. Blenkinsopp and Enns have both espoused this position. However, this position makes a number of major, unwarranted assumptions which Currid points out. Perhaps the most bizarre assumption is that Genesis 2-3 was written after Israel's exile! The liberal scholars have virtually no agreement on which century they think Genesis 2-3 was written in, and therefore this assumption has no backing.

Guy Prentiss Waters shows in Chapter 29 how TE is incompatible with the NT, an excellent exercise in biblical hermeneutics, and Zaspel shows in Chapter 31 that B. B. Warfield did not espouse TE as modern TEs define the term. Warfield was deeply skeptical of many of evolution's claims all throughout his life. It is therefore not wise for TEs to use Warfield to back their views.

In conclusion, while this book is certainly long and involved, the careful reader will learn much of value, in biology, philosophy, and theology. The book succeeds, in my opinion, in casting grave doubts as to the plausibility of macroevolution in general, and theistic evolution in particular. Take and read!

**Review: J. Philip Arthur. *Christ all-sufficient: Colossians and Philemon simply explained*. Welwyn Commentaries. Faverdale North, Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2007. Paperback, 240 pp. ISBN 9780852346556. Reviewed Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.**

A British Baptist minister, Phil Arthur has authored three books in the Welwyn Commentary Series, including ones on 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and this one on Colossians and Philemon. The volume being reviewed here is penned in a very personal, pastoral, and practical style, reflective of not only the deep impression Colossians had on him early in his Christian walk, but also of the fact that his reflections on that epistle were originally presented as sermons to the Free Grace Baptist Church in Lancaster, England. The book is divided as follows:

Part 1: Colossians

Introduction to Colossians

1. Paul greets the Colossians (1:1-8)

2. Paul prays for the Colossians (1:9-14)
3. The incomparable Christ (1:15-20)
4. An incomparable salvation (1:21-23)
5. Paul describes the nature of his ministry (1:24-29)
6. Paul identifies with his readers (2:1-5)
7. True spiritual progress (2:6-7)
8. Don't let yourself be kidnapped! (2:8-10)
9. Don't belittle conversion! (2:11-15)
10. Don't be intimidated! (2:16-17)
11. Don't let yourself be defrauded! (2:18-19)
12. Why do Christians let the world set their agenda? (2:20-23)
13. Be heavenly-minded! (3:1-4)
14. Take no prisoners! (3:5-11)
15. A new set of clothes (3:12-17)
16. The Christian home (3:18-21)
17. The Christian in the workplace (3:22-4:1)
18. The new nature and our habits of speech (4:2-6)
19. A capacity for friendship (4:7-18)

Part 2: Philemon

Introduction to Philemon

20. The kind of man who can forgive (1-7)
21. Why should Christians forgive? (8-25)

Appendix: A word about books

Notes

Arthur writes that Colossians was designed to protect against those who "would wean people away from Christ in subtle ways by making them preoccupied with other things in addition to [Christ]." Paul's epistle, which is "full of Christ," points out that "Christ is magnificent, that nothing can compare with him and if we have Jesus, we have enough" (16).

That Christocentric emphasis is maintained throughout this volume. "... [A]nyone who has a share in Christ has all that there is of God. Christ is inexhaustible. The treasures of divinity will never run out; the supply of grace is limitless" (48). "All true Christians long to know the Christ they have with greater intensity and consistency, but he cannot be improved upon. To inform people that they need to move on from what they have in Christ is to insult him" (50). "The Christian leader is not merely to expound Scripture; he is to preach Christ. (There is a way of talking about the Bible which can end up obscuring Christ. With some preachers, Jesus gets hidden behind a forest of words and arguments.)" (68) "Ultimately, he [Christ] is the only true teacher" (96). "Jesus is wonderful beyond description" (96f).

Much pithy wisdom can be found in Arthur's commentary. "Showy gifts are worthless where there is no love" (35). Paul's call to a mature faith "is a sharp challenge to much of modern evangelicalism which thrives on a cult of the infantile

and the asinine” (87). “Conversion to Christ ... is a spiritual baptism in which we undergo a real death and a dramatic resurrection, having become brand new persons altogether” (104). “Churches are still being seduced from first principles and stolen from under the noses of their members” (127). “A preacher who leaves people confused is a bad preacher” (195). Materialism and legalism detract from our gospel message (197f). Using gracious language seasoned with salt is the only way to communicate lovingly: “No one was ever nagged into the kingdom” (199).

A much briefer section deals with the epistle of Philemon. Arthur reminds us here that a refusal to forgive others causes damage in several areas: it “puts the person who wronged him in prison and throws away the key”; “helps encourage the growth of ... a ‘root of bitterness’”; “gives the enemy an opportunity to exploit”; and “will mar our relationship with God” (217f).

As Presbyterians, we would disagree with several of Arthur’s views. For example, he argues that the “rite of baptism takes the form of a burial, not in earth but water, and a re-emergence” (103). He rejects the idea that “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” is a reference to the Psalter (166f). He maintains that “the externals of worship” are trivial matters, and suggests that those who disapprove, for example, of pipe organs in public worship are guilty of being like “the burglars of Colosse” who would steal from Christ’s glory (121).

Despite these shortcomings, this is, overall, a good commentary, which can prove to be personally edifying as well as useful in preparing messages.

**Review: Michael Horton, *Justification*, volumes 1–2. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 399 and 527 pages. Paperback. ISBN 9780310491606 and 9780310578383. \$74.99. Reviewed by the Rev. Lane Keister.**

While authors have written many tomes on justification in the last twenty years or so, there is always need for more to be written about the article by which the church stands or falls. Furthermore, the doctrine has become rather controversial in both academic circles and in the church. Most of the readers of *The Confessional Presbyterian* will have at least a passing acquaintance with the New Perspective(s) on Paul (hereafter NPP), which are hardly new any more. Fewer readers are aware of the revival of the so-called apocalyptic views of justification, as espoused by Douglas Campbell in his monumental volume on justification. Campbell’s views, however, are receiving a goodly amount of attention in the literature. When the ecumenical aspects of people leaving evangelicalism for Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy are added to this mix, clarity on justification for new generations is something on

which our future hangs. Enter Michael Horton’s two-volume work, which will speak to a broad audience while defending a confessionally Reformed understanding of justification.

The structure of the two volumes is simple. The first volume is an historical examination of the doctrine. It is by no means exhaustive. It seeks to tell a very particular narrative, and that narrative is not primarily a history of the Reformed tradition on justification, but rather what the main lines of interpretation in church history on the doctrine have been. The second volume is a systematic-theological and exegetical examination of justification as it appears primarily in Paul’s letters. The second volume is divided into four parts, each of which have between two and four chapters. The four parts are labeled “The Horizon of Justification,” “The Achievement of Justification,” “The Gift of Righteousness,” and “Receiving Justification.”

Some general observations about the two volumes are in order before getting into specifics. Firstly, the two volumes defend a robust confessionally orthodox Reformed understanding of justification. This is not surprising, as Horton has been a stalwart champion of the Reformational understanding of justification for many years now. Secondly, Horton is seeking to be persuasive to an audience that is primarily skeptical and/or not Reformed. He is addressing the academy and the church, but the church he is addressing is not primarily the Reformed one, but the churches outside the Reformed tradition. This helps explain some of his bibliographical choices, which might otherwise be puzzling. For example, Horton spends a great deal of time on Origen’s views on justification, but hardly ever mentions John Owen, Anthony Burgess, John Colquhoun, or James Buchanan. This is not because Horton devalues their contribution, but because these are not the authors to deal with (primarily) if one wants to convince the naysayers. Origen is chosen because he is the basis of so much problematic doctrine later in church history, and especially in the Roman Catholic Church.

In chapter one, Horton asks whether yet another tome is justifiable (!) on this topic. Given the NPP, the revival of the apocalyptic theory (a la Douglas Campbell), and the Finnish interpretation of Luther, there is definitely room for another work on justification that addresses modern issues. Horton is at his best when dealing with these modern interpretations.

Chapters two and three address the early church fathers and their interpretation of justification as a sweet exchange. Even here there was diversity, with some pronouncing on something fairly close to imputation, while others drifted far from biblical moorings.

Chapters four and five look at the Medieval versions of the doctrine in Lombard, Aquinas, and the nominalists. While Horton is a bit kinder to Aquinas than others from the Van Tilian perspective might be, he certainly places indulgences

squarely in the center of the discussion, as an invention of Lombard (99). With regard to Aquinas, Horton says, “As counterintuitive as it may seem from a Protestant perspective, *within the medieval paradigm* emphasis on infused righteousness is motivated by a concern to avoid any semi-Pelagian (much less Pelagian) notion of attaining righteousness apart from grace” (103–4, emphasis original). Still, it cannot be denied that the Medieval tradition on justification was fairly thoroughly non-forensic. The nominalist tradition was famous for saying that people should do what they can. Here Horton gets a bit more technical, perhaps, than he needs. For instance, he says, “Thomas’s epistemological intellectualism (i.e., the conformity of the will to reason) is grounded in and reinforces his ontological realism, while Scotus’s voluntarism is inseparable from his protonominalism” (140). While it is certainly true that voluntarism and nominalism were key philosophical ideas in the medieval period, this kind of sentence tends to fly by the average reader’s comprehension.

Chapters six through nine treat of the Reformation era conflicts, focusing on Luther, Calvin, and the Roman Catholic response at Trent. Although, as has been said, Horton advocates a confessional treatment of justification, and offers non-controversial readings of the Reformers, there are some places where clarity is lacking. For example, Horton says, “Union with Christ does not provide a basis for God’s discerning in us a righteousness imparted; rather, on the basis of justification we partake of Christ’s vivifying life” (215). This could be taken to mean a dichotomy between union with Christ and sanctification (especially in the first half of the quotation), which is surely not Horton’s object. Horton believes that justification is the source of union with Christ (*ibid.*). This claim will be controversial, especially among those who hold to a more Westminster Philadelphia point of view. Especially in dispute would be Horton’s claim that the “*act* of justification is logically prior to union” (219, emphasis original). Horton’s admirable desire to prevent any ontological change or relational change from being the basis of justification leads him perhaps to what some might call overstatement. The *basis* for justification is the finished work of Jesus Christ imputed to believers and received by faith alone. On this point, all confessionally Reformed theologians would agree. However, this does not mean that union with Christ is necessarily logically subsequent to justification. If Calvin is correct in 3.1.1 of the *Institutes* (that Christ is of no benefit to those who are outside of Christ), then temporally, at least, union with Christ cannot postdate justification. A distinction can legitimately be made among various meanings of “union.” There is legal union, and there is personal union, as the Berkhof quotation on page 219 reminds us.

In chapter ten Horton expounds on the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace in

the context of the law-gospel distinction. His position is that the Sinai covenant has the terms of Deuteronomy 28 as to the covenant possession of the land, but is a distinct administration of the covenant of grace in a typological and subservient way with regard to the forgiveness of sins (300). For Horton, the Abrahamic covenant lies behind the Sinaitic and gives it the more primal impetus of grace. The types and shadows of the Mosaic sacrificial system point to the sacrifice of Christ. Horton finishes volume one with a look at justification after the Reformation, and describes it as the triumph of nominalism. With the exception of Reformed confessional authors, this claim is certainly borne out by the evidence.

Volume two begins with a salutary rejection of the suspicion that many exegetes and systematians have of each other. Horton recognizes that exegesis is never done without boundaries, and that systematic theology is always based on exegesis (20). Horton outlines some of the major modern challenges to the traditional doctrine and notes that many of the challenges have an element of the truth while being one-sided. Horton proposes to incorporate the positive tweaks that some of the challenges have brought, while remaining true to the Reformational understanding of justification. In this, I judge that Horton’s attempt is a success, by and large.

The first major part of volume, chapters one and two, deal with Adam, Israel, and works of the law in Paul. In chapter one, Horton lays out his case for understanding Sinai as a legal covenant, and the priority of the Abrahamic covenant in the over-arching covenant of grace. As this topic has been addressed above, I will move on to chapter two. In general, Horton defends the Reformational understanding of the phrase as excluding all works from justification. I do not think Horton needed to give any ground to Sanders, such as agreeing with him that Paul argues from solution to plight (107), or in saying that “The new perspective has wisely cautioned against reading the Reformation debate into Paul’s polemic” (112). However, such statements are not the normal treatment of the NPP from Horton, who rejects the main lines of the NPP and most of its smaller arguments as well. For instance, Horton agrees (rightly) with Fitzmyer (over against the NPP) on the phrase “works of the law” as it is to be interpreted in the Dead Sea Scrolls document 4QMMT. It means more than just the “boundary marker” works. In describing the Jewish plight as seen by Paul, Horton offers this gem: “In other words, the plight is not that Jewish Christians are not Jewish enough, nor that they are too exclusive, but that they are essentially Gentiles—cut off from Christ and therefore from God’s covenant of promise” (136). And later, he says, “Paul’s frame of reference (in Romans 7:5–6, LK) is the coming wrath, not against Israel but against the whole world; it is not just a question of how gentiles get into Israel’s covenant, but how sinful

*Continued on Page 220.*

they were led to prayer and praise and to “acknowledge sin, profess faith, and renounce evil.”<sup>89</sup>

What made everything from the opening hymn to the closing benediction new was not so much the ‘elements’ themselves, but the theology that informed them. With the Roman Catholic liturgy on one side and the Extremists on the other, in 1525, Luther composed an order of service that reflected both God’s action and man’s response. To him, both were central and provided a unified way of understanding public worship. It was God’s action that elicited man’s response.<sup>90</sup> For the troubled people of Wittenberg, a liturgy like this one would lead them to consider their true condition, hear of an afflicted Christ, find comfort for their weary souls in the Gospel, and be encouraged to respond with faith. The same still rings true today.

#### CONCLUSION

Luther’s words at the dedication of the castle church in Torgau hinted at the core of his theology of worship. “The Lord himself speaks . . . and we in turn speak . . .”<sup>91</sup> In the gathered assembly, God serves man and in response man serves the Lord. Public worship is first a divine activity, which creates and compels corporate expressions of faith. Contra late medieval practices, it is not a ‘doing of what is in one’s self’ nor an opportunity for ‘grace to make one gracious.’ Instead, it is “an example of divine grace in action.”<sup>92</sup> Luther’s view of preaching further reinforced this point. God is at work to meet the sinner in his struggles with *Anfechtungen* through his audible and sacramental Word. But as the Law and Gospel are heralded, a response of faith is called for. There is to be an intentional reaction of humility, repentance, gratefulness, and devotion. Luther’s 1525 liturgy took his doctrine of worship and converted it into a structure for doxology; in fact, it was the foundation and the fuel of his order of worship.

In a church context where the gathered assembly is increasingly being referred to as a ‘worship experience,’ Luther would no doubt disapprove, because Modern Evangelical worship is one sided. Liturgies are dominated by human action, leaving little room for divine activity in Word and Sacrament. They are focused on man’s response without first considering God’s past, present, and future work. The preached Word is minimized, in order to provide longer music sets or more extensive choral performances. Scripture is made to give way to singing, which, given song choices, centers worship on man blessing God, as opposed to God blessing man, through

90. Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, “The Lutheran Tradition in the German Lands,” pp. 396, 398.

91. Martin Luther, quoted from “The Lutheran Tradition in the German Lands,” p. 396.

92. Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life*, p. 196.

Gospel proclamation. Additionally, the sacraments are seen as a public profession solely, to the exclusion of God declaring the visible Good News that he saves sinners in Christ and by the Spirit. These worship practices are built upon a theological foundation that leans too far in the direction of human response. Luther, however, provides a helpful perspective on and balance to the public gathering. Public worship is a service: God’s to man, first and foremost, and in response, man’s to God. The Evangelical Church in America would do well to benefit from Luther’s theology of worship in this area.

#### *The Noahic Covenants and Redemptive Judgment.* Continued from Page 162.

cultural mandate, he prohibited consuming animal blood (Gen. 9:4). It is God’s pedagogical lesson that animal blood offered in altar worship after the inauguration of the covenant of grace in Genesis 3:14–15 is the type of the final sacrifice, offered on the Golgotha by Jesus Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant. The New Covenant community, as *the diaspora or pilgrims*, is no longer obligated to abstain from animal blood after A.D. 70 because God permanently terminated altar worship and the Old Covenant order with the fall of Jerusalem.

God prohibited the killing of innocent humans in the context of his command of the new cultural mandate (Gen. 9:5–6). God’s institution of capital punishment in the historical context of the resumption of the covenant of common grace suggests that God made a proper distinction between church and state. In that sense, the prosecution and execution of criminals for the crime of killing of innocent people do not belong to the ministry of church, but are the legal responsibility of state under the New Covenant Age until the day of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. ■

#### *Reviews & Responses.* Continued from Page 180.

Jews and gentiles can get out of the covenant of works altogether” (139).

Part two is entitled “The Achievement of Justification,” and therefore treats of Christ’s accomplishment of perfection. Horton, agreeing with Lee Irons, rejects N.T. Wright’s definition of the Greek word “*dikaiois*” as being equivalent to “God’s covenant faithfulness,” and instead ties the term to the standard of the law. The second half of chapter four is a defense of the penal substitutionary atonement. Horton also defends the combination of penal substitutionary atonement with the *Christus Victor* theme, rightly in my opinion. There is no need for a false dichotomy between the two ideas. Christ’s death and resurrection is just as undoubtedly a substitution for our persons as it is Christ’s victory over Satan and his evil forces. However, this does not mean that there is something good about the ransom theory of the atonement (243). Here, I believe Sproul is on the better track: God saves us from God’s

wrath. The payment is not made to Satan. Now, Horton does not believe in the ransom theory per se, but rather winds up collapsing the “good” elements of the ransom theory with the *Christus Victor* theme (243). If Satan holds any allegiance from people, it is an illegitimate claim, not a legitimate one.

Horton believes that there is no future aspect to justification whatsoever (275). Horton does believe in a public acquittal, but rather than including this aspect under justification, he includes it under glorification (see page 279).

Part three speaks of the gift of righteousness, namely, how we get the righteousness of Christ. The heart of this section is his discussion of imputation. Here Horton is at his best: defending the traditional Protestant understanding of imputation over against the NPP, the apocalyptic understanding of justification, and the Finnish interpretation of Luther. Here Horton advocates the idea that Judaism knew and held to the idea of imputation. The disagreement with Paul therefore had to do with the identity of the person imputing, and the identity of the person’s righteousness that is imputed (328). On only one thing I would disagree with Horton in the chapter on imputation: I would not agree with Horton that Peter Leithart is an evangelical (350, fn. 75). In the chapter on works and the future of justification, Horton argues fairly standard Reformed positions, including a careful positioning of works as necessarily consequent to justification, not necessary unto justification (394). I could wish he would have had a larger discussion of the relationship of James and Paul on the question of justification. However, what he does say is helpful (394).

Part four is primarily about faith, the instrument of justification. Horton rejects Roman Catholic understandings of “faith perfected by love,” and emphasizes faith’s receiving and resting nature. Horton rejects also the subjective interpretation of the phrase “faith of Jesus Christ” (which would mean “the faith that Jesus Christ himself possessed”), and understands the phrase objectively (“faith in Jesus Christ”). That this is certainly the correct understanding of the phrase is well supported by the quotation from Moises Silva on page 424. There are a fair number of typos in this section of the volume, and there were a more than average number of typos in the books as a whole.

Horton’s book has many helpful features, and, on the whole, must be judged a success, as long as its main object is kept in view: to convince people who don’t already believe the doctrine. There are controversial and somewhat unclear things in the two-volume set, but this is still a solid contribution. When read in tandem with volumes by John Owen, Anthony Burgess, James Buchanan, J.V. Fesko, and the promising collection of essays edited by Matthew Barrett, the reader will have a thorough grounding in the biblical doctrine of justification. ■

### *Psallo. Continued from Page 181.*

neighbor. He justly judges the vile, rejecting him as the object of his favor or friendship, and he honors, literally, he glorifies, or ascribes worth to those who fear the Lord. He is a man of right discernment.

The fourth set of attributes concerns his own lack of self-interest, even when it is costly to him. He keeps his vows even when it hurts; he refuses even the nominal return upon his generosity and lending, and he refuses unrighteous enrichment at the expense of those who are innocent. He is a man who puts away his own self-interest for the good of others.

In all these descriptions we have a picture painted of not one of Adam’s race—at least not in the full sense and perfection of any of these attributes as they are first found in the Lord God, who dwells on that Holy Hill. We are reminded in this listing of impossible moral attributes to fallen men that there is One who has, as man, met this holy standard. Hear Bonar:

None can be said to have fulfilled the conditions, or come up to the character here sketched, excepting Christ, if we view the matter in its strictness; although every member of His body lays claim to His imputed obedience, and exhibits a goodly specimen of the effect of this imputation in producing personal holiness. We consider this Psalm as descriptive of our Head in His personal holiness, and of His members as made holy by Him.”<sup>4</sup>

This is the truth of the matter. We, humbled by these descriptions of replete holiness of heart, speech, and behavior are caused to look outside ourselves, for in our fallen condition, we cannot dwell with the Almighty, we cannot in any capacity other than as a usurper, an interloper, enter into the place of that holy and rarified air. It is the *Mountain of His Holiness!* And so we use that hermeneutical key that assists us in unlocking the Psalms, as we keep “one eye on David, and one eye on Christ.” As we look to our Head, who has attained, although no one else was found worthy to “open the book, and loose the seven seals thereof” (Revelation 5:1-5), we proclaim that He alone is worthy. We are taught here in Psalm 15, of the perfection of Christ, the only one of our race who has perfectly kept these moral attributes, being “made of a woman, made under the Law” (Galatians 4:4) and who also is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26).

However, I do think that Bonar is on to something when he says that it is in Christ that we have new ability to walk after all His ways, imitating Him, following His example. And this latter sense of dwelling with the Lord as a Holy People is indeed clear in the Scriptures. We read often of the people of God being a people separated unto the Lord, and as that separated people,

<sup>4</sup>Andrew A. Bonar, *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 48.