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Reformation
& Revival



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Doctrine comes from the Word of God. The Word addresses our consciousness. It is given for our understanding. The Word engages the mind, not the elbow. The Word is the Spirit's book. The Holy Spirit inspires the Scriptures. He is the Revealer of truth.

R. C. Sproul

God's mind is revealed in Scripture, but we can see nothing without the spectacles of the Holy Ghost.

Thomas Manton

Book Notices

John H. Armstrong

An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch. Herbert Wolf (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991). 276 pages, cloth, \$21.99.

Herbert Wolf, associate professor of Old Testament at Wheaton Graduate School, has given us a reliable, informed and helpful volume. The church leader often puzzles over good source material on the Pentateuch which interacts with current scholarship while at the same time not surrendering ground to higher criticism. Here is a source that accomplishes this purpose without putting off the lay reader who is a serious biblical student.

An Exegetical and Expository Commentary: The Minor Prophets, Volume One. Edited by Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992). 507 pages, cloth, \$34.95.

Thomas McComiskey, professor of Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, provides in this volume some of the best modern exegetical resource on the Minor Prophets available today. In this first volume in a three-volume series. McComiskey treats Hosea, Raymond Dillard deals with Joel, and Jeffrey Niehaus comments on Amos. The comments stand in the tradition of the famous Keil and Delitzsch series, with a contemporary approach to the Hebrew text reflecting the best in textual studies. Although this volume is a stretch for most laymen (using the Hebrew words of the text which are translated in every case) I recommend serious readers consider purchasing this as a standard resource for years to come.

An Exegetical and Expository Commentary: The Minor Prophets, Volume Two. Edited by Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993). 413 pages, cloth, \$39.99.

The second volume issued in the three-volume series began with the volume referred to in the previous notice. This volume covers Obadiah (Jeffrey Niehaus), Jonah (Joyce Baldwin), Micah (Bruce Waltke), Nahum (Tremper Longman III), and Habakkuk (F. F. Bruce). McComiskey gives us the overview of the writers by saying, "Anyone who reads the Minor Prophets and hears only words of recrimination and judgment has not read them fairly. Within the dismal events these prophets describe lurks the hand of God, and beyond these events is the bright prospect of a kingdom."

Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Volume One. Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987). 365 pages, paper, \$12.99.

Richard Muller, professor of historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, gives us the most important analysis of Protestant scholasticism in our era. Douglas F. Kelly says, "All competent future studies of the theological tradition lying between the close of the Reformation period and the beginning of the secularist Enlightenment will have to proceed by way of Muller...." Muller's thesis will challenge the views of those who see post-Reformation orthodoxy as a kind of downward direction into Scholasticism producing a rigid Calvinism which would have been unrecognizable to Calvin. When Baker reprints this volume, I hope they reset the type into a readable format.

Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Volume Two. Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993). 543 pages, paper, \$24.99.

Muller contends that much modern scholarship respecting the early Protestant view of Scripture has an agenda, and thus misrepresents the true facts. This is ground break-

ing, important material. In this second volume in a three-volume series, Muller argues that later Reformed theologians did not develop radical or rationalistic views of Scripture as argued in the past two decades by several important authors. Professor Paul Helm, author of *Calvin and the Calvinists*, described the first volume (see above) as "a work of excavation, of theological archaeology by someone who is knowledgeable, erudite, and an enthusiast. Professor Muller is bringing to our view work of great interest and importance, bones that can live."

The Works of Philo. Translated by C.D. Yonge. Foreword by David M. Scholer (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993). 944 pages, cloth, \$29.95.

A complete and unabridged version of one of the most important tools for classical and biblical study. Philo, who was a contemporary of Jesus and Paul, is undoubtedly one of the most important writers for historians and biblical students of Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity. Philo lived in the world of the New Testament, though he never mentions Jesus or Paul. An example of his importance is seen in much of what we understand about the importance of the *logos* in John's Gospel. His work has bearing on our study of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the surrounding culture of the early church and other important matters. This is an affordable single volume edition, which offers convenience and usefulness to all who wish to study the era of the early church in original source material.

The Everlasting Righteousness. Horatius Bonar (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1874, reprinted 1993). 211 pages, paper, \$7.50.

Another of the useful titles being reprinted by the Banner

of Truth, a publisher who has done great service to the recovery of Reformed and classical Christian literature in our age. Bonar (1808-89) was a famous Free Church of Scotland minister who is best known today for his hymns. He wrote over six hundred, of which one hundred are in common use today. This volume is vintage Bonar—wise, helpful and plain. He answers the question: “How shall a man be just with God?” The principles of substitution are made plain. Highly recommended for all ministers and church leaders.

The Interpretation of Prophecy. Patrick Fairbairn (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1865, reprinted 1993). 532 pages, cloth, \$28.95.

Patrick Fairbairn (1805-75) was a respected and competent biblical scholar of the Free Church of Scotland. His writing reflects the best of biblical concern mixed with wise pastoral insight. He is the author of numerous books, several of which have been reprinted. The present volume, first issued in 1856, is perhaps the best-known book by Fairbairn. He lays out principles of interpretation, the nature of prophecy and the characteristics of prophetic style. Particular attention is given to Daniel and Revelation. Fairbairn represents the “old school” approach to future themes and should be highly regarded and read by all genuinely interested in this subject.

Letters of Henry Venn. With a Memoir by John Venn (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1835, reprinted 1993). 594 pages, cloth, \$26.95.

Henry Venn (1724-97) was an Anglican rector in Yorkshire who was awakened to grace while a student at Cambridge. He experienced in Huddersfield, during a twelve-year par-

ish ministry, a mighty awakening in the church under his care. Like John Newton, a contemporary of Venn's, his most enduring legacy is found in his correspondence. I have read these letters with much profit and believe this kind of literature, virtually unknown in our fast-paced era, is immensely valuable to serious and reflective believers. I prize this book above most of the speculative and richly illustrated modern material that passes for “popular” Christian reading.

The Best of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Compiled by Christopher Catherwood (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993). 241 pages, paper, \$6.99.

We have needed a book with which to introduce the most important preacher of our century. This little book provides it. If you have not read much of Lloyd-Jones and would like to discover his writings, or introduce him to friends, try this volume. Selections from ten different books are included.

Heavenly Citizenship: The Spiritual Alternative to Power Politics. Fred R. Lybrand, Jr. (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Treasure House, P.O. Box 310, 17257, 1993). 136 pages, paper, n. p.

A most interesting book written by the son of a state senator who serves as pastor of Midland Bible Church in Midland, Texas. Emphasizes the New Testament doctrine of the believer's union with Christ as foundational, warning believers that their spiritual priorities are not to be found in political action. Much needed balance regarding our present role in society is given in this popularly written book. Pastors should read this and urge activists of all sorts to get a copy.

Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths. Alister E. McGrath (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). 241 pages, paper, \$14.99.

Dr. McGrath, fast becoming one of the best-known evangelical scholars of our time, uses his gifts to minister in both the academic world and the church. Pastors and lay leaders can read McGrath and will almost always profit by doing so. McGrath, who teaches theology at Oxford as well as Regent College, has given us a popular, but nonetheless academically valuable, introduction to the issues of apologetics. The thesis of this book is that Christianity must appeal to more than reason alone. McGrath feels classical apologetics is not enough, but he does not embrace presuppositionalism either. McGrath, trained in science with a Ph. D. in microbiology, offers compelling reasons for faith in Christ. He says, "Apologetics is not about winning arguments—it is about bringing people to Christ." The subtitle, "Building Bridges to Faith Through Apologetics," gives the reader a good idea of what McGrath intends to do in this well-written book.

The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23. John Piper (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993, Second Edition). 245 pages, paper, \$14.99.

A very important exposition of a very critical chapter of the Epistle of Romans. Explores the meaning of the Greek text very meticulously and carefully. The spirit of the author's approach is pastoral and nonaggressive in tone, yet unflinchingly faithful to the theology of the text. It would be far too easy for readers to think that this is simply classical Calvinism without honestly dealing with the author's faithful adherence to the text itself. When you finish you may be forced to say, "The text is very clear in what it says. Now what will I do with the plain teaching of God's Word?" This

second edition improves the type and style of the first, which was issued in 1983. Highly recommended for pastors who would preach this text and for laymen who would search out the subject of God's sovereignty biblically.

Deserted By God? Sinclair B. Ferguson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993). 182 pages, cloth, \$14.99.

Some years ago I stumbled into the idea of "spiritual desertion" as taught by the Puritans several centuries before. I had seen the truths of this teaching in my frequent readings of the Psalms but had never put together a systematic way of thinking about what I now know to be a most important subject for all seasoned believers. Pastors need to preach on this subject, and this book will introduce them and their fellow leaders to a useful and popularly written contemporary treatment of this subject. Ferguson has a gift for writing to the heart with much depth behind his work.

A Passion for God. Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994). 215 pages, cloth, \$15.99.

Romans has inspired more reformation and stirred more revival in the history of the church than any other portion of the New Testament. With this in mind Raymond Ortlund wrote this book, a modern and thoughtful paraphrase of Romans, joined with prayers and questions aimed at stimulating personal devotion through careful response to Scripture.

Luther called Romans "the clearest gospel of all." Coleridge called it "the profoundest book in existence." Chrysostom had it read to him twice a week. Melancthon copied it twice in his own hand in order to make it his own. In the spirit of these and countless others Ortlund wishes to

make Romans central in the thought of modern readers by collecting stimulating insights from a number of sources, thoughts, and writers, both ancient and modern. He offers the reader a wonderful tool for careful, meditative personal worship and devotion. Highly recommended for both pastors and lay readers. A good use of scholarship combined with practical wisdom.

Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity. E. Earle Ellis (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993). 289 pages, paper, \$13.99.

A republication of a volume first issued in 1978, this is a highly technical work aimed at scholars who are interested in critical questions surrounding the New Testament text. Ellis, who teaches theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, examines the dispute between Paul and his opponents.

Ellis demonstrates that New Testament prophets were not mere opinion givers, but faithful prophets who actively assisted in the missionary outreach of Paul to the pagan world. This is serious academic scholarship of the type which demonstrates that evangelicals can and do deal with criticism as it relates to the New Testament text.

Biblical Interpretation Then and Now. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992). 247 pages, paper, \$14.99.

This treatment, subtitled "Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church," considers important figures of the early church such as Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Clement, Augustine and Jerome, and their influence on biblical exegesis. Says Dockery, "Biblical interpretation determined theology and theology shaped biblical hermeneutics." With

this in view he tells a fascinating story of how Jesus' use of the Old Testament affected the church and its understanding of the covenants and the interpretation of key texts.

This is a very readable book and, though aimed at scholars, it is the kind of book that many will find beneficial if they would *reach up* to its very important message. Highly recommended.

The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven. Arthur Dent (Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994 reprint). 332 pages, cloth, \$24.95.

A valuable reprint of a 1599 Puritan classic long unavailable to the modern reader. Dent was a nonconformist who suffered for his faith. Like others who have endured affliction for the gospel, his written work is deeper as a result of the profound lessons learned in the school of pain. In the Puritan era this was a widely read book which became a kind of manual for the common person. It uses the pilgrim motif common to much of this type of writing.

John Bunyan wrote of this work, "(in) *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*...I found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me." The book, written in dialogue form, went through twenty-five editions by 1640, and forty-seven by 1831. We can be grateful that it has been reissued in our lifetime.

Gospel Incense. Thomas Cobbet (Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994 reprint). 414 pages, cloth, \$29.95.

Cobbet, a seventeenth-century English Puritan minister, studied at Oxford and pastored at the small village of Lincolnshire. After being persecuted he came to New England and pastored in Lynn and Ipswich until his death in 1686.

In this volume, last reprinted in 1856, Cobbet gives us a practical discourse on prayer, wherein he addresses the nature, duty and qualifications of prayer. He addresses public, private and secret prayer, something almost never attempted in our day, where public prayer is in such disastrous condition in the average church. A very useful resource for pastors and church leaders.

The Christian's Freedom. George Downname (Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994 reprint). 131 pages, cloth, \$15.95.

One of the most misunderstood of all Christian doctrines is liberty. Whether the extreme be legalism or antinomianism, the enemy has always driven believers to extremes. Downname argues that true liberty is the freedom to do what is right, thus "the law of liberty."

This reprint was last published in 1835. A debt of gratitude is owed to Soli Deo Gloria Publishers for making such classics available once again.
