

youth ministry take 2

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From the Editor

Occasionally I come across a different take on a subject we have already looked at in the pages of *Ordained Servant*. As a New Testament scholar, T. David Gordon looks at what the New Testament has to say about youth ministry with some surprising discoveries. One need not agree with his conclusions to appreciate and benefit from the nuances of his careful exegesis.

On a similar theme, next month I hope to review Thomas Bergler's latest book *From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity*. This is a practical sequel to his *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* (2012). After this eye-opening critique of American youth ministry, it is helpful to have him offer a positive alternative, which he only briefly summarizes at the end of the 2012 book.

William Edgar, professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, offers a graciously critical review of David Skeel's *True Paradox*, demonstrating how a presuppositional or transcendental, Van Tilian approach, could make a good thing better.

John Fesko's review of Franciscus Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, exposes us to a forgotten great among post-Reformation theologians. Our own David Noe translated this little gem. It reminds us that we have neglected a treasure in the oft-maligned Scholastic Reformed thought. Richard Muller, who has done more than anyone in recent history to reveal these riches, writes the foreword.

Stephen Baugh reviews the second edition of the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, now edited by Moisés Silva. He compares this new, extensive, and useful revision to the other tools already available to students of the New Testament.

Martin Emmrich reviews the festschrift for Professor James A. DeJong, former president of Calvin College. Festschrifts are always interesting for the variety of contributions they offer. Emmrich notes the best of those in this volume.

Finally, a little known poem by diplomat, poet, and author Giles Fletcher the Elder (1548–1611), “Crucify Him!” It is a good example of the concise, condensed focus of good poetry, not seeking to tell all, but rather giving new perspective on something well-known. On another note, the reason I do not publish contemporary poetry has nothing to do with its contemporaneity, but rather with the difficulty of procuring permissions.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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Ordained Servant exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

Servant Work

Youth Ministry?

by T. David Gordon

Introduction and Thesis

When I am asked to speak or lecture on either preaching or hymnody (I've written little books on each), inevitably during the Q&A someone asks me something like, "What about the youth?" or "But how do we reach the youth?" Perhaps such frequently-asked questions ought themselves to be questioned, because frequently-asked questions tell us something about us and our concerns. So here's my question: Why do so many people *ask* questions about "the youth"? As a matter of simple arithmetic, people live only about twenty of their seventy-five years as non-adults; and expend the other fifty-five years as adults. If people live nearly three times as much of their lives as adults, why don't I receive three questions about adults for every one question about the young? Further, most people mean a different thing by "youth" than they do by "childhood." By "childhood," they refer to those who are entirely dependent on adults for their care, and by "youth" they mean that awkward stage between childhood and adulthood, about a five-year period, or roughly one fifteenth of an individual's life.¹ Why has no one ever said to me: "But Dr. Gordon, how are we going to reach the adults?" Especially in light of the fifth commandment ("Honor your father and your mother"), why aren't Christians concerned about honoring adults and/or elders; why are they so concerned about honoring/reaching/addressing youth? Why develop strategies of ministry aimed at such a brief period of human existence, and this particular brief period? Indeed, why not develop strategies of ministry for people who are about to die and meet their Maker? Isn't the status of those who are about to face God's judgment more critical than the status of those who are fifty years away from the same?

The Bible recognizes either three or two categories of humans: children, adults, and elderly; or (like the IRS) dependents and non-dependents (since the elderly are also dependent, as witnessed by Paul's instructions regarding widows in 1 Timothy 5 and the apostolic appointing of deacons to care for them in Acts 6). But the Bible does not recognize the category of "youth;" people in that brief window of human life where they are capable of substantial, but not entire, independence. In and of itself, this does not mean that we may not recognize the category; but it should raise questions about why such a large ministerial category exists in our churches that did not exist at all in the apostolic church. The category of "dependents" (infants, widows) existed ministerially, but not the category of "youth." Let me reiterate: In saying that the Scriptures do not recognize this category, I am not suggesting that it is illegitimate *per se* to do so; special revelation in Scripture is always augmented and/or complemented by natural revelation. I

¹ Sociologists are now also addressing a group they call "emerging adults," aged 18–29, so perhaps we will see this group targeted for special ministry. Cf. Jeffrey Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road*

merely remind that “youth” is an intellectual construct; something *we* have made, and have made fairly recently. As Notre Dame’s Christian Smith says:

Life stages are not naturally given as immutable phases of existence. Rather, they are cultural constructions that interact with biology and material production, and are profoundly shaped by the social and institutional conditions that generate and sustain them. So “teenager” and “adolescence” as representing a distinct stage of life were very much twentieth-century inventions.²

If we find such “cultural constructions” to be helpful, that is fine; but it is important to distinguish our *own* constructs from biblically-given constructs, since the former are negotiable and the latter are not. Few enterprises are more important than the enterprise of labeling aspects of reality correctly.

The Human Duty of Naming

Most Christians agree that naming is an ethical duty, a responsibility of the human as a bearer of God’s image, since God gave names to the things that he had made:

And God *called* the expanse Heaven. (Gen. 1:8, emphasis added)

So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would *call* them. And whatever the man *called* every living creature, that was its name. The man *gave names to* all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field . . . Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be *called* Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Gen. 2:19–10, 23, emphasis added)

What humans *call* something, then, is not an insignificant matter. We either imitate God well by naming things well, or we imitate him less well by naming them poorly; but we cannot escape the duty of employing language well. When we give a label to something, we also give it a kind of intellectual or mental existence;³ we cannot think about things that have no labels, whereas we can and do think about things that have labels. So the question is: Does “youth” exist in reality, or merely in our brains? Is “youth,” like “unicorn,” something that exists in language but not in fact? And is the existence of “youth” significant enough to warrant linguistic existence?

I think the answer may be “no.” We already have the term “adolescent” in our dictionaries; and it does the job better, because it clearly designates a moment in human existence that is both brief and awkward; if “adolescent” has any connotative value, its

² Smith, *Souls in Transition*, 6.

³ Linguists sometimes refer to this as “reification,” or “concretism,” when we create a “thing” out of something that actually does not exist (metaphysically) simply by creating a word. When people ask why God “created evil,” they misconstrue language, for instance, because “evil” is an adjective, not a noun, and therefore has no created existence. It is an adjective of moral disapproval that we employ to evaluate certain behaviors, and until such behaviors were committed, “evil” did not exist.

value is negative, whereas “youth” is either connotatively neutral or positive. But the reality of this phase of life *is* awkward; a stage of life in which the individual is somewhat dependent on adults, but capable—if an accident took his or her parents away suddenly—of living independently. Whether we say “youthful” or “adolescent” or “juvenile” is not a neutral matter; one of these words is probably more suitable than the others, and it is our duty to employ language as well as we can. In my judgment, we would think about the entire matter differently if we simply called it “Juvenile Ministry” or “Adolescent Ministry” rather than “Youth Ministry,” so I am gently questioning the propriety of the present label. I do not intend to close the conversation here, but to begin one: If we have such ministry at all, how should we label it, and why should we label it that way? I concur with Christian Smith that the label “youth” is a cultural construct, not warranted or necessitated by Scripture; on my website, I have a fuller version of this article, that includes several pages of the biblical evidence that brought me to this conclusion, and readers are invited to consult that fuller version there (<http://tdgordon.net/theology/>).

Strategic Questions

When Luther thought of the younger people, his advice was both positive and negative. Positively, they should be taught to sing adult hymns; negatively, they should be weaned away from their own music:

The music is arranged in four parts. I desire this particularly in the interest of the young people, who should and must receive an education in music as well as in the other arts if we are to wean them away from carnal and lascivious songs and interest them in what is good and wholesome. Only thus will they learn, as they should, to love and appreciate what is intrinsically good.⁴

Luther, then, did nearly the opposite of what we do: We give the young people their own music, and require the rest of the church to conform *to* their music. Luther weaned them *from* their music and trained them to appreciate adult music.⁵ Insofar as Luther recognized youth as having any distinctive ministerial considerations, the considerations were negative: Don’t let young people remain young very long. Implicit in Luther’s program were two beliefs. First, Luther believed that there were and are objective standards by which we evaluate music; and second, Luther believed that young people needed to be educated in order to know and appreciate what these standards are.⁶ Our

⁴ Preface to the *Geistliches Gesangbüchlein*, cited in Walter Buszin, “Luther on Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 1946): 87.

⁵ I do not insist that we follow Luther on every point. However, I do suggest that we not dismiss him briskly. After all, unless you have translated the entire Bible from its original languages into your own language and written commentaries on many books of the Bible, you probably do not know the Bible better than he did. Unless you have written a catechism that the church has employed for nearly five centuries, you probably do not know theology better than he. And unless you have written thirty-six hymns (lyrics and music) that have lasted for five hundred years, you probably do not know music better than Luther did. And if you haven’t done all three, you may not be as well-rounded as he on the matter. So don’t assume from the outset that you are his peer on this matter; you probably are not; I know I am not.

⁶ I do not dismiss or disagree with the common comment that many young people (and their parents, for that matter) do not “connect” with sacred music. To the contrary, I wrote a book attempting to explain the

culture tends to waffle on both these points, if not deny them outright. But Luther was probably right on both scores.

Luther was right that there are some objective criteria for evaluating music, so that he could refer to what was “intrinsically good” in music. Whenever a personal acquaintance parrots our culture’s mindless mantra about musical beauty “being in the eye of the beholder,” or “just a matter of taste,” I chuckle, as though they’ve told a joke. “Very clever, I say; that’s a good one.” When they protest that they are being serious, I tell them they are seriously mistaken and mildly dishonest (this part is ordinarily not well-received, but since I judge it to be true, I continue to say it). I ask them if they enjoy singing a hymn while standing next to someone whose pitch is off. Do they enjoy trying to stay on pitch while hearing someone else who is singing off-pitch (or listening to a piano that is untuned)? The answer, universally, is “no,” and I threaten to prove it by standing next to them at church the coming Sunday and deliberately singing off pitch (it is difficult to do so, but it is a difficulty I am willing to endure to ferret out dishonesty). Pitch is an objective truth; it can be measured by devices that measure cycles per second (commonly called “hertz”). The concert A, for instance, is precisely 440 hertz (though it was once 435). Again, I ask such individuals: “Do you enjoy attempting to sing a hymn that has been pitched too high for you to reach many of the notes?” Again, I get a universal reply of “no.” No one enjoys attempting to sing a melody in the wrong key signature, and again, with a cooperative accompanist I can prove this by transposing the hymns into unsingable keys and having the accompanist play the hymns in those unsingable keys. If their patience is not by now exhausted, I ask them if they enjoy hearing two altos singing on either side of them, the one singing the correctly-written alto line that, at a given moment, has an interval of a third (perhaps an E-natural to the melody’s G-natural), while the other is singing some other interval (a D or an F), and again, they reply “no,” because it is unharmonious to do so, and the human neurology finds it (ordinarily) objectionable (“dissonant”). By this point, the conversation turns to baseball or politics, before I can ask if the individual finds it pleasant if a person next to him or her sings the entire hymn in a different rhythm (or to a different metrical melody entirely), or portions of it to different rhythms, but the answer would be the same.

Luther rightly understood that music is an objective phenomenon; sound exists outside of us and it has some mathematically-measurable properties that the human neurology finds pleasant (even infants appear to be calmed by lullabies). But the same neurology finds other sounds to be unpleasant, and still others to be not unpleasant in themselves but only apt for certain purposes or occasions. A kazoo, for instance, might be a delightful instrument to play at someone’s birthday party, but not one human in a million would choose to have it played at his mother’s funeral. So while it might be right to say that some people’s musical tastes are more refined than others, or that some

cultural causes *for* this disconnect. But the solution is not simply to discard sacred music. The church has an instructional responsibility, and perhaps, like Luther, we should instruct both young *and* old in the Christian duty of singing praise to God. Part of that instruction would include the value of celebrating the catholic church/communion of saints by employing hymns that others have employed; and part of that instruction would include teaching about the practical non-viability of re-writing a hymnal from scratch every twenty-five years in order to sound “contemporary.” If people who don’t read poetry can learn to read poetry; if people who do not initially “connect” with Brahms can learn to enjoy Brahms, then people can also learn to appreciate sacred music. It is uncharitably cynical to suggest that people cannot step outside of their comfort zone and learn new things.

people's musical sensibilities are more developed than those of others (some people notice pitch more acutely than others, and "hear" dissonance when some others do not), it is not true that there are no objective standards for assessing music.

I sometimes object that some (not all) of the contemporary worship music does not resolve. Sandra McCracken's rendition of George Matheson's "O Love that wilt not let me go," for instance, does not resolve, and I regard this as a defect, especially in a hymn of trust. Many individuals tell me they enjoy the melody fine; and I do not doubt that they do. But resolution is a musical and psychological reality easily proven to exist (perform the final movement of a symphony publicly and omit the last three measures; see what kind of reaction you get). For thirty or forty years much pop music has not resolved, either (often it just fades out); and people whose sensibilities have been shaped thereby may not *notice* the lack of resolution as a defect, any more than some people do not *notice* when someone beside them sings off-pitch; but in each case the matter is objectively true and objectively defective. Luther was right to recognize that there are some objective criteria (things that are "intrinsically good") that distinguish some music as better than other music, and he was right to train younger people to notice the difference.

Luther also correctly understood that, if left to themselves, young people would ordinarily prefer the wrong kinds of music. The same young people who, when a little younger, would prefer chocolate to vegetables, who need to be trained to recognize what is nutritious from what is not, also need musical training. Their youthful instincts are almost always wrong about almost every thing (remember *Lord of the Flies*?); why would we regard their untrained musical instincts as being any better than their other instincts? Regarding human sexuality, do we tell them just to do whatever they like? Regarding beverage alcohol or narcotics, do we tell them that whatever they think about the matter is fine? Why has our culture's paedocentrism reached into the arena of music, but not into the arenas of human sexuality or substance abuse?

I also wonder why the consideration that we must adopt the music of young people is not extended to preaching. Why do we not gear our preaching to the youth? Should we restrict our grammar and vocabulary to that of the youth? Paul surely did not. Though he addressed the children in Ephesians (6:1), for instance, the vocabulary and syntax of Ephesians is remarkably mature and sophisticated. In the original, the first seven verses of chapter two constitute a single sentence that contains fifteen clauses and thirteen prepositional phrases; there is nothing unsophisticated about such a sentence; it is a masterful piece of Greek syntax, that makes even the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* seem simple by comparison. Try creating such a sentence yourself and see if you can even do it; I doubt that I could.

Should we restrict our preaching topics to topics that interest the youth? Must we consult the youth to determine what interests them, and only preach on things that do (did they appreciate Paul's commanding them to obey their parents)? If they have no interest in the resurrection, may we not still preach about it? Not long ago, I preached a sermon from the first half of John 11 that focused on the reality (and perhaps responsibility) of grieving. Most youth would have no interest in such a topic; they're very healthy, fairly present-centered, and many of them have not yet grieved. But John's gospel candidly records the grieving of Martha and Mary (and oh—by the way—Jesus) and the efforts of

“the Jews” to console/comfort them. So it’s in the Bible, and therefore ought to be preached, whether the youth are interested or not.

But now, if we should not adjust the ministry of *preaching* to the capacities or interests of youth, why should we adjust the service of singing God’s praise to the capacities or interests of the youth? Why is there not a single church on our planet that adjusts its preaching ministry to the youth while *not* adjusting its musical ministry to them? If the stated goal is “reaching the youth,” why “reach” them (whatever that means) with music but not with preaching? Should it not be the other way around? Why do we wring our hands about “losing the youth” if we do not cater to their alleged musical interests, but not wring our hands about losing them if we do not cater to their preaching interests?

Paul said that when he became a man, he *gave up* his childish ways (1 Cor. 13:11). Perhaps the best “ministry” we can perform for youth is to urge them to give it up as soon as possible, to draw them into adulthood as soon as we can, so they can learn to be successful responsible adults as quickly as possible.⁷ After all, assuming a normal life-span, they will be children for roughly a dozen years, “youth” for five, and adults for fifty. Why not learn to do adulthood as soon as possible? And perhaps the best way to draw young people into adulthood quickly is to regard them *as* adults, to treat them *as* adults, rather than to institutionalize “youth” via “youth ministry.” Let me illustrate.

When I was in high school, the pastor of the Bon Air Baptist Church, Robert F. Cochran, took an interest in me and in my expressed interest to consider attending college and seminary with a view to becoming a minister. Rev. Cochran routinely let me accompany him in a wide variety of pastoral duties, and one night we visited a man in the psych ward of one of the Richmond hospitals. The man seemed fine, and for the first fifteen minutes or so of our visit he was entirely lucid. But then, with no visible change or visible agitation, no difference in the tone of his voice or expression on his face, he began to speak almost total nonsense (not hostile or violent, just nonsense). Later, as we drove home, Rev. Cochran said to me, “David, how should I have handled a situation like that?” In asking me the question, he was inviting me into the world of *adult* churchmanship. He was inviting me to think as a minister thinks, about the things a minister thinks about. I still love Rev. Cochran’s memory sincerely, and I especially love him for regarding me—a youth at the time—as an adult. He asked a sixteen-year-old what he would have asked a fellow minister of sixty years.

What I suggest, then, is that we move children to adulthood as soon as they are capable of being so, without ghetto-izing them in an adolescent world in between. As

⁷ Many cultural observers are noticing that the millennial generation is extremely slow to become adult. Cf. Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes our Future* (New York: Tarcher, 2008); Smith, *Lost in Transition*; Robin Marantz Henig and Samantha Henig, *Twentysomething: Why Do Young Adults Seem Stuck?* (New York: Penguin, 2012); Jean M. Twenge, “The Millennials: The Greatest Generation or The Most Narcissistic?” *The Atlantic Online* (May 2, 2012) <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/05/millennials-the-greatest-generation-or-the-most-narcissistic/256638/>; Hope Reese, “Yes, 20-Somethings Are Taking Longer to Grow Up— But Why?” (*The Atlantic Online*, November, 2012) <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/11/yes-20-somethings-are-taking-longer-to-grow-up-but-why/265750/>. Smith et al. put it this way: “Emerging adulthood is at heart about postponing settling down into real adulthood . . . Emerging adulthood as a social fact means not making commitments, not putting down roots, not setting a definite course for the long term” (Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 231).

soon as they are emotionally and intellectually capable of dealing with the matters adults deal with, we should invite them to do so. When I pastored in New Hampshire, this is what we did. We provided no separate education for our youth; they went directly to adult classes as soon as their parents judged they were capable of dealing with adult realities. And, by rubbing shoulders with adults at an earlier age than at many churches, a good number of them matured more quickly.⁸

For those who decide to retain their current Adolescent Ministries (by whatever label), I gently suggest that we do everything in our power *not* to normalize “youth.” If we have special ministries directed to adolescents, they should be aimed at expediting their arrival at adulthood. We could/should teach courses on family finances, courses on selecting a spouse, about community service and churchmanship, and perhaps above all, courses on marriage and family. We should gear everything towards getting them beyond adolescence ASAP, and into successful adulthood ASAP.

Cultural Sources of “Youth”—Commerce and the Sixties

As an observer of American culture, I can see at least two cultural forces that, in my judgment, are responsible for “Youth Ministry,” because they are responsible for youth *culture* (I call it “paedocentrism”) itself. First, commercial forces in our culture understandably wish to appeal to the unrefined tastes (and impulsivity) of adolescents (and adults who are like them). Of course it is easier to produce less-refined art than more-refined art. It is much cheaper to produce a recording of Justin Bieber than it is to produce a recording of Brahms’s Fourth Symphony. A typical symphony orchestra has nearly a hundred musicians; how many constitute Bieber’s ensemble? Further, the average number of years of experience with the musical instrument is probably about thirty for the players in a symphony orchestra; I’m not sure Bieber is even 30 years old. Therefore, commercial interests surely hope that the musical tastes of the potential buying audience will remain comparatively unrefined. Bieber probably outsells Brahms a thousand to one; but this does not mean he is a thousand times better (or any better). It merely means that people who currently could *not* appreciate Brahms *can* appreciate (and purchase) Bieber, which suits commerce fine. Commerce has an enormous financial interest, therefore, in youth culture, in propagating and encouraging the unrefined, impetuous wishes of the young.

A second source of paedocentrism in our culture is the Sixties. My generation (a generation whose iconic band The Who performed the hit “My Generation”) was very aware of its rebellion against its parents’ generation. One might even say that youth culture began in the sixties. Those who were youngsters then are CEO’s now, college presidents now, and deacons and elders of churches now.⁹ The very generation that never repented of its open warfare against those elders whom the Scriptures teach us to honor is now the regnant generation; and in their regnant role they just assume that every

⁸ I am not suggesting that every church do as we did; there may be a number of very good reasons for occasionally addressing youth *qua* youth. I merely suggest that we not treat the cultural construct of “youth” as anything *more* than a cultural construct; and that we recognize what we lose in addition to what we gain. By isolating/ghetto-izing youth from adults, we lose something.

⁹ And, as Camille Paglia has observed, some are “ass-kissing deans” at prestigious universities who once marched in the Free Speech movement and now enforce political correctness statutes at their universities.

generation wishes to be different from its parent's generation because we wished to be different from ours. But this projection is not historically accurate; such rebellion against elders is simply not historically universal. Even more surely, the Holy Scriptures do not endorse such widespread contempt (or any contempt) for one's elders.¹⁰

Concluding thoughts

As is often the case, the challenge of Romans 12:1–2 will not go away. In every moment and regarding every significant reality, we must ask whether our attitudes, practices, and values reflect our conformity to “this age” or whether they reflect our diligent efforts to be transformed by renewed minds. Is it not possible that youth culture itself, and therefore alleged “youth ministry” reflects a culture's hostility to the biblical warnings about childish folly and a culture's hostility to the biblical injunctions to honor our elders?

My concern, of course, is not that we not care for young people; we care for all the members of the body of Christ. My concern is both linguistic and strategic; is it wise and helpful to normalize or institutionalize the awkward years of adolescence by the expression “youth ministry?” Is it wise to flatter young people that their understandably immature, ill-conceived, and unrefined impulses are ordinarily wholesome, and to be a standard that directs the rest of us? Is it wise to ghetto-ize young people, retarding and delaying their entrance into adulthood? Which will serve their becoming adults better: separating them *from* adults or mingling them *with* adults? To raise the question may be to answer it.

It is, of course, not wrong to love the youth specially, at least in the etymological sense that “specially” shares with “species.” Of course we love all members of the body of Christ with a due regard for their *kind* or *species*, for their circumstances in life. We care for a widow differently than we do for an elderly woman whose husband is still living; we take notice of her species or kind, and serve her in a manner appropriate to her condition (without necessarily having a Minister of Widows). And we should do the same with our youth, recognizing how awkward the transitional years can be, recognizing that their vocabulary may not yet be as refined as that of an adult, that their social skills are still under-developed, and that their world of experience is smaller. But we can do all this without ghetto-izing them and without flattering them. The adult world will not revolve around them; and we will not prepare them for that adult world if the ecclesiastical world does revolve around them.

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¹⁰ Zoologists remind us that some species are noted for the peculiar habit of eating their young; in our culture, it may be the other way around.

ServantReading

True Paradox by David Skeel

A review article

by William Edgar

True Paradox: How Christianity Makes Sense of Our Complex World, by David Skeel. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 2014, 175 pages, \$15.00, paper.

We are witnessing a veritable renaissance of Christian apologetics. Religious book catalogues from many perspectives advertise more and more titles on apologetics. Schools and institutes dedicated to training apologists can be found throughout the world. There is a multiplication of both institutions and online resources dedicated to this discipline. Some are quite specialized, such as the Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies in Columbia, South Carolina. Others are more wide-ranging, such as the Oxford Centre for Apologetics. Perhaps the long hibernation of apologetics, due in no small way to the theology of Karl Barth, is over.

The causes for such a renaissance are mixed. Certainly factors such as the rise of Islamism and the vocal boldness of the so-called “New Atheists” have stimulated responses from their opponents, Christian or not. Perhaps also the post-everything culture of our times has meant greater freedom for believers to state their views. One trend which promises to have an important future is the post-secular movement. It could be an opportunity to speak of the impossibility of consistent materialism. Also, the fact that today, unlike a few decades ago, many of the most prominent philosophers are professing Christians, has given a boost to apologetics.

Not all of this renaissance is positive, at least from my point of view. Some of its advocates employ methods and arguments that are either irrelevant or simply heterodox. Some of the material is good in some parts, but not so good in others. Some of it is creative, some is humdrum.

David Skeel’s new book is anything but humdrum. It is imaginative, full of learned allusions, and elegantly written. The basic thesis of the book is that the Christian faith is commendable because of its complexity. While, to be sure, the heart of the Christian message is simple: Jesus Christ is God, and he died and was raised from the dead to secure our reconciliation with God (12), we should not shy away from complex issues such as the Trinity and the problem of evil. If the resurrection is the central *sine qua non* which makes Christianity different from any other view, there is also laudable paradox. The introduction sets up the problem. Most skeptical arguments against the faith suffer from a wrong kind of simplicity. But so does much of contemporary apologetics, making its narrow arguments a “grand distraction” in the larger theater of the world.

Thus, Skeel believes that both arguments for the faith, as well as many arguments against it, are fatally simplistic. In pleading for the plausibility of complexity of the

Christian faith he is in good company. G. K. Chesterton argued in *Orthodoxy* (1908) that complexity is not an enemy but a friend of true religion: “When once one believes in a creed, one is proud of its complexity, as scientists are proud of the complexity of science.” It may not be coincidental that Chesterton often made use of paradox in his apologetics. Similarly, C. S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity* (1952), asserts that it is no good looking for a simple religion, since reality is not simple.

Still in the introduction, Skeel rehearses a debate between the brilliant Christian philosopher William Lane Craig and the atheist physicist Lawrence Krauss. Craig basically used one of the traditional theistic proofs. With a great deal of deference and respect for Craig our author declares his rationalist strategy to be “counterproductive.” His use of a pure syllogism which moves from the assertion that everything that exists has a cause to the explanation for the existence of the universe being God may be logically valid, but it is not persuasive, because it does not take into account our human inclinations beyond the narrowly logical, particularly the artistic and moral sensibility. Skeel also points out that to call the first cause God may resonate well with our Judeo-Christian sensibilities, but it is not a necessary connection. Logical arguments, such as Craig’s, will be perceived by many non-Christians as simplistic and even manipulative (25).

A second popular kind of apologetics Skeel respects but finds lacking in impact is the “courtroom model.” A lawyer himself, Skeel has an insider’s understanding of the method consisting of putting both unbelief and the Christian faith on trial. He reviews the remarkable work of Philip Johnson whose book *Darwin on Trial* (1991) likely set off the current interest in Intelligent Design (ID). Johnson accuses the presumption that evolutionism is true to be disingenuous because it rests on very thin evidence. And yet, says Skeel, despite establishing that evolutionism can be reasonably doubted, very few are really persuaded. In a courtroom the lawyer must only demonstrate the absence of indisputable evidence, not the actual innocence of the accused. After all, strictly speaking, truth is not the objective of a criminal trial, but only the presence or absence of reasonable doubt. People believe in evolutionism because they want to, and it would take far more than a Johnsonian strategy to dissuade them.

It works the other way. A parallel procedure in the defense of the Christian faith is also weak principally because it does not allow the Christian faith to speak from the strength of its own evidences, which are far more than a few measurable proofs. Materialists and other skeptics bound by the scientific method will accept only measurable or quantifiable evidence. Intangible factors such as love or grace are not interesting to them. Even the growing consensus for a universe with a beginning, rather than the eternity of matter, may be a victory in a particular battle, but hardly the end of the war (32–34). Skeel does not consider apologetic efforts such as Craig’s or Johnson’s to be altogether without value. He only finds them narrowly “cosmological” rather than able to solve the truly great puzzles of existence, such as our sense of beauty, and the universal acknowledgement of morals and law.

If not cosmology, where should the Christian apologist begin? Skeel’s answer is human consciousness. In this he is not alone. Although they are possibly not aware they are doing so, some of the apologists in the Talbot School, particularly J. P. Moreland

(*The Soul: How We Know It's Real, and Why It Matters*),¹ utilize an argument from human consciousness. In his own way so does the unique Francis Spufford (*Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense*).² Actually, a proper understanding of human consciousness is an important component of Cornelius Van Til's apologetics, though in a very different manner than Moreland, Spufford, or, for that matter, Skeel (a subject for another occasion).

The rest of *True Paradox* is an exploration of how to recognize and engage a series of features that preoccupy our souls with the Christian message: beauty, suffering, justice, life, and the afterlife. The author handles them with great sensibility and is greatly persuasive. We do not have space in this short review to go over all of them. I have read and re-read the book and plan to read it again, as it contains riches and beauties which indeed commend the Christian faith in a way the limited tactics of pure logic and pure courtroom tactics cannot.

At the same time there is a serious problem with Skeel's approach of *true-because-paradoxical*. His evidences are mostly presented without a foundation. To put it technically, he rarely acknowledges the transcendental conditions whereby anything, including his views on the Christian faith, can have meaning or value. As a Christian he obviously believes in revelation and in the authority of God's self-disclosure. Indeed, he often alludes to the biblical basis for his conclusions. But he almost never forthrightly sets them within the worldview which begins with a self-attesting Christ. As a result we are given extremely attractive arguments for the validity of the Christian religion, many of which I have used myself in different settings. But at some point the intelligent interlocutor is going to ask, Why paradox? Why these criteria? What are your foundations?

A couple of samples will have to suffice. The first chapter is a study of how ideas and idea-making tend to verify universally acknowledged moral standards. Not because they all state the same values in the same way, which clearly they do not. But because they acknowledge, even when arriving at different applications, that humans all know what is fair and just, deep down in their conscience. Materialist accounts of our ideas cannot explain why this is so. Skeel does not engage naively in a pure form of natural law. He does come around to heralding the Christian account of our moral awareness. In a nice part of this discussion he shows how the biblical standards are, on the one hand, stricter than those of materialist relativism, and, on the other hand, more liberating than those, say, of Middle Eastern law. Still, the Christian approach turns out to be true because it passes the test of the paradox: ideals must be plausible to all people everywhere, and yet they must critically put into question the wisdom and practices of various societies (49). But why should we accept this test? Ironically, the same objection to Craig's use of syllogism could be launched against this sort of neutral criterion: it lacks a transcendental anchor.

The same sort of procedure characterizes Skeel's argument from beauty. In the excellent chapter "Beauty and the Arts" he shows great sensitivity and deep acquaintance with aesthetics. But as he deconstructs the materialist account of beauty he can only

¹ J. P. Moreland, *The Soul: How We Know It's Real, and Why It Matters* (Chicago: Moody, 2014).

² Francis Spufford, *Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2012).

manage to say that to dismiss the subjective experience of beauty is “something deeply unsatisfying” (67). And his retort to the pantheist view (that it fails to perceive the paradox of why some things are beautiful and others are not) is this: “But it seems more likely that the universal experience of beauty as real but incomplete, as something we know only in glimpses, is not mistaken” (73). To be fair, he does get around to presenting the Christian alternative as a “teaching,” one that celebrates the paradox of complexity and tension within a good art object. He even helpfully alludes to the New Critical view of the need to reconcile opposites in a poem as proof of its integrity, something parallel to the paradox of the Christian faith. But in the end, his claim is only that “Christianity provides a uniquely satisfying explanation of why we find these particular qualities as alluring” (79).

Earlier I stated that Skeel’s evidences are mostly presented without a foundation. The word *mostly* is an important qualifier. He does here and there allude to underpinnings. In his chapter on justice he discusses human rights. He admits that many materialists can be deeply committed to human dignity, as are believers in different religions. The principal difference, though, “is the foundation of these beliefs. While materialists may allude to the “trappings of consciousness,” such as our ability to choose, as the basis for human rights, Christians believe in something deeper: “Our dignity comes from being loved by the God who created the universe,” which truly makes for equality in a way materialists cannot justify (127).

Actually, throughout the book Skeel invests a good deal of time simply describing the biblical account of whatever particular point he is trying to argue, even making it quite clear that this is what he strongly believes. In his lovely chapter on life and the afterlife he counters the “cosmic bribe” critique of materialists with several strongly biblical emphases to the effect that the heavenliness of heaven is not principally its particular joys (although looking forward to those joys hardly discredits the faith, as long as they are used to frame life on earth, not as merely sensuous rewards for good works). Rather, the central experience of heaven is the enjoyment of permanent reconciliation with God.

Readers of this review should not get the wrong impression. I have not said that the neglect of more clear connections to the transcendental foundation is a fatal flaw in the book. It would be ungrateful and ungenerous to dismiss the power of this book because the author does not more often explicitly connect each of his arguments to the authority of revelation, at least as often as he might. In his own way he makes it clear that the connection is there. But he is diffident about it. What we need today, if I may be so bold, is a renaissance of Christian apologetics that is both transcendentially (biblically) based and also persuasive. By reworking some of the arguments in *True Paradox* so that they are well founded, not spoken louder, like someone trying to make himself understood to a foreigner, but spoken wisely and persuasively, we would have an even better presentation of the gospel. Skeel’s is already very good. It could be even better.

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A Treatise on True Theology *by Franciscus Junius*

A review article

by John V. Fesko

A Treatise on True Theology, by Franciscus Junius. Translated by David C. Noe. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014, lii + 247 pages, \$40.00.

Seldom do I get giddy about the release of a new book, but the translation and publication of Franciscus Junius's *A Treatise on True Theology* is certainly an exception to my otherwise dispassionate appreciation of books. Many Reformed readers are likely unfamiliar with Junius's work and instead come into contact with its substance through the writings of other theologians, such as Herman Bavinck or Louis Berkhof. In their respective treatments of theological prolegomena (the presuppositions to one's theological system) Bavinck and Berkhof both employ the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology.¹ Archetypal theology is God's perfect, infinite knowledge of himself and ectypal theology is the true but finite shadow or copy of the divine archetype. But Bavinck and Berkhof were not the first theologians to employ this distinction. Rather, they gleaned it from seventeenth-century Reformed Scholastic theologians. Franciscus Junius first borrowed the distinction from medieval theologians and employed it in his treatise, *On True Theology*. In the past, anyone who wanted to learn more about the distinction could only access it through Junius's Latin original or the small body of English-language secondary literature.² But this has all changed with the translation and publication of Junius's treatise.

Given the fact that much of the twentieth-century spotlight has fallen disproportionately upon John Calvin and his theology, other important contributions from the likes of Junius have been forgotten or ignored. Yet Junius was one of the most esteemed theologians of his day, evident by how widely his archetypal-ectypal distinction was employed among the Reformed as well as even among Lutheran and Remonstrant theologians (xi). Theologians such as John Owen, Richard Baxter, Jacob Arminius, Francis Turretin, Johannes Wollebius, Petrus van Mastricht, Johannes Cocceius, Gisbert Voetius and many others employed Junius's distinction (xliii–xliv). In fact, Willem van

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–08), 1:212; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (1932, 1938; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 94.

² See, e.g., Willem J. van Asselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 (2002): 319–35; Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1:229–37.

Asselt notes that the archetypal-ectypal distinction was “assumed by nearly every Reformed author” (xlii–xliii).

This new translation offers several beneficial features, such as a preface by Richard Muller and a historical-theological introduction by Willem van Asselt, two of the most accomplished authorities on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology. Van Asselt’s introduction, one of his last published writings before his death, offers a first-rate overview of Junius’s life and influence as well as the significance of this treatise. Beyond the preface and foreword, the translator, David Noe, professor of classics at Calvin College and OPC ruling elder, has done a tremendous job translating this work. He offers a very readable annotated translation. Moreover, along the way Noe provides readers with very helpful editorial annotations that explain the classical references and allusions that Junius makes throughout his treatise.

As far as the treatise itself, its form is likely a bit foreign to readers used to the discursive pages of Calvin’s *Institutes*. Junius presents his treatise in thirty-nine separate theses that he then defends at greater length. For example, thesis 5 states: “Theology is wisdom concerning divine matters” (85). In thesis 11, Junius writes: “The theology, which we call that of union, is the whole wisdom of divine matters, communicated to Christ as God-man, that is as the Word made flesh, according to His humanity” (86). Junius, therefore, argues and defends the claim that wisdom about God (theology) is chiefly revealed through the incarnation. These two theses form part of the logical foundation in Junius’s later claims that supernatural theology (revealed theology) is a mode of knowledge beyond human reason (88). These theological points rest, of course, upon the archetypal-ectypal distinction. In thesis 10 Junius explains the significance of the distinction vis-à-vis revelation to finite human creatures: “But theology that is relative is the wisdom of divine matters communicated to things created, according to the capacity of the created things themselves. It is, moreover, communicated by union, vision, or revelation” (86). Junius’s point is that God has designed human beings to receive revelation—a knowledge that is appropriately suited to their finite capacity. While some of Junius’s theses may seem obscure, one of his chief goals is to defend the idea that “the primary or highest end of theology is the glory of God, for theology shows this glory for all to behold, and also all good men by a right use of this wisdom render that glory confirmed, just as wisdom is justified by her children” (207). Hence, as technical as some of his points are, Junius’s goal is ultimately practical and pastoral. His goal is to give doxology to our triune God and these presuppositions act as guardrails to keep his theological system on an exegetical and orthodox path.

Beyond these observations three reasons commend the purchase and study of this treatise: (1) the importance of understanding theological prolegomena, (2) the crucial nature of one of Reformed theology’s most fundamental and classic distinctions, and (3) recognizing the connections among contemporary Reformed theology from Bavinck and Berkhof, to seventeenth-century Reformed expressions, and their medieval predecessors.

First, for many fans and students of classic Reformed theology, Calvin’s *Institutes* constitutes the definitive theological statement. But when readers compare Calvin’s work with others, such as Turretin’s *Institutes* (1679–1685), or Bavinck’s *Dogmatics* (1881), or Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology* (1932, 1939, combined edition 1996), there is a noticeable difference—Calvin does not treat prolegomena, whereas the latter three do. What is theology? How is theology defined? Is theology a speculative or practical

discipline? What is the relationship between faith and reason? How can finite creatures relate to an infinite God? What is the nature of language about God? Is it univocal, equivocal, or analogical? These are all typical questions that fall under the category of prolegomena.³ Pastors and theologians often do theology but do not give explicit thought to these important theological presuppositions. The sixteenth-century Reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, never gave great attention to these questions, so subsequent generations addressed them. Some might think that such questions are pedantic or unnecessary, but they become quite relevant when someone in your church asks, “What does the Bible mean when it says that God is love?” Prolegomena assists pastors to think through these knotty issues so they can answer in what way God is love.

Second, understanding the archetypal-ectypal distinction is one of the most fundamental presuppositions to doing sound theology. We must recognize that there is both a quantitative and qualitative difference between God’s knowledge of himself and our knowledge of God. As finite creatures we cannot comprehensively know God otherwise we would be God. But just because we cannot comprehensively know God does not mean that we cannot have a true but nevertheless finite apprehensive knowledge of him. The archetypal-ectypal distinction guards the idea that God is the creator and we are creatures and that all of our knowledge about him is divinely revealed. This distinction acted as a bulwark against both rationalism and mysticism. In the recent past, apologetes such as Cornelius Van Til employed this creator-creature distinction but appears to have been unaware of the classic archetypal-ectypal distinction.⁴ The archetypal-ectypal distinction would have been helpful, I believe, in assisting the OPC in the Clark-Van Til debate, which was chiefly about the nature of our language about God—matters that relate directly to prolegomena.

Third, the popular narrative that I often hear in the church is that the Reformation was a complete break with the theological past. The Reformers started with their Bibles and a blank slate. The real story, however, is significantly different. When Junius was writing his treatise on prolegomena, he raided the Catholic Church’s treasury of knowledge. He went back to medieval theologians because they had done extensive work on prolegomena. Junius did not merely seek these medieval works for pragmatic reasons but wanted to learn from them and expose others to good theology. This does not mean that Junius believed that all medieval theology was orthodox, lock, stock, and barrel. Rather, he gleaned valid and true insights and employed them in his own theological work. Junius’s treatise is an excellent exercise in studying Catholic theology. In this vein, Herman Bavinck once wrote:

Irenaeus, Augustine, and Thomas [Aquinas] do not belong exclusively to Rome; they are Fathers and Doctors to whom the whole Christian church has obligations. Even the post-Reformation Roman Catholic theology is not overlooked. In general, Protestants know far too little about what we have in common with Rome and what divides us. Thanks to the revival of Roman Catholic theology under the auspices of

³ Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:86.

⁴ On the affinities between Van Til and the classic archetypal-ectypal distinction, see Jeffrey K. Jue, “*Theologia Naturalis*: A Reformed Tradition,” in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, eds. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2007), 168–89.

Thomas, it is now doubly incumbent on Protestants to provide a conscious and clear account of their relationship to Rome.⁵

Junius interacts with numerous sources from antiquity and a diverse cross section of theological voices to construct his treatise.

There is much to learn from Junius's engagement of sources. Moreover, Junius's work just might encourage readers to conduct their own theological raids to plunder our Catholic heritage. Sadly, the twentieth-century Reformed tradition took a decidedly negative opinion regarding our common theological heritage, and this was often done apart from consulting primary sources. Scholasticism of every stripe, medieval and Reformed, was written off as speculative and syncretistic. At a bare minimum, readers can now wrestle first-hand with the exegetical and theological claims in Junius's work and determine whether his thought is genuinely speculative or syncretistic. My hope is, however, that readers will come away with a different evaluation, one where they have a greater appreciation for Junius's clarity, insight, and orthodoxy. Such was the appraisal of Bavinck and Berkhof, among others. In fact, Abraham Kuyper believed that Junius's work was so important that he edited a modern edition of his select works in Latin.⁶ In addition to this, with Junius in hand, readers can explore the connections, for example, between Bavinck and Junius on their respective prolegomenas to see to what degree the former employed the latter.

Anyone interested in studying Reformed theology should purchase a copy of Junius's treatise. I especially encourage seminarians and pastors to purchase a print edition of this work. Read it, mark it up, enter into a dialogue with Junius in the margins, and even tuck it under your pillow at night. The church owes David Noe and Reformation Heritage Books many thanks for making this influential work available in English translation. Maybe this new translation of Junius will foster a second-wave of influence among Reformed theologians to the edification of the church. Given his theological acumen, the widespread influence he had in his own day, the use of his insights by twentieth-century Reformed theologians like Bavinck and Berkhof, and the exegetical-theological importance of the archetypal-ectypal distinction, students of the Bible would do well to study carefully Junius's treatise.

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⁵ Herman Bavinck, "Foreword to the First Edition (vol. 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 9–10.

⁶ Franciscus Junius, *Opuscula Theologica Selecta*, ed. Abraham Kuyper (Amsterdam: apud Frederium Muller, 1882).

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New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis *edited by Moisés Silva*

by Stephen M. Baugh

New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, Second Edition, edited by Moisés Silva. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 3,535 pages in five volumes, \$249.99.

This large reference work is a complete revision of the earlier *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (NIDNTT) edited by Colin Brown in 1975–78, which was itself a translation and reworking of an earlier German *Theologisches Begriffsllexikon* (“Theological Concept-Lexicon”). This version is yet another complete reorganization and expansion of NIDNTT by Moisés Silva and is now abbreviated with the even more unwieldy “NIDNTTE.”

Although I had looked at the earlier work edited by Brown in the past, it was a seriously flawed work, and I never really consulted or recommended it to students or pastors. It discussed an incomplete collection of Greek terms under English “topic” words. For example, under “Blood” one finds various Greek words referring to “blood,” “sprinkle,” and “strangle.” Why not “atonement,” “body,” or “sacrifice” also? One never knew if the topic was covered with any sort of depth or with sound linguistic method, as Silva himself admits in the introduction to this version when he says that it had “considerable variation and inconsistencies” (1.5).

If anyone has the ability to display depth and sound linguistic method for studying the Greek New Testament (NT), it is Moisés Silva. The question before us then is whether Silva has accomplished the herculean task of turning an essentially flawed reference tool into something which is worthy to add alongside an indispensable Greek lexicon or two, a Bible dictionary, and a sound systematic theology. This question is heightened when Silva admits that “theological dictionaries of biblical words are odd creatures and, as such, susceptible to being misused” (1.7). They are indeed odd ducks, but “being misused” implies the problem is with the reader. Is there not also a flaw in the whole concept and design of theological dictionaries which contributes to this misuse?

One obvious problem with a dictionary approach to theology is that it is not established by an examination of individual scriptural words across their range of meanings but by a careful, exegetical reading of biblical *statements* in their various contexts. As just one example, we read in Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this [τοῦτο, *touto*] is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” It is helpful to study “grace,” “saved,” and “faith” here, but how Paul combines these words together is the foundation for his theological conception. And a key word here is

the neuter demonstrative pronoun “this,” which refers not only to “faith” but to the whole statement as God’s gift: grace, salvation, *and* faith (cf. Phil. 1:29; WLC 71). Yet demonstrative pronouns are not “theological words” and don’t appear in theological dictionaries, including NIDNTTE.

So the question again is whether Moisés Silva has fixed the shortcomings of this theological dictionary to make it worth the investment. First, this is a very well-produced publication. There are four large volumes to the dictionary proper, consisting of about 750 pages each; they are surprisingly lightweight, and seem to be well bound. The fifth volume of nearly 400 pages is a complete index volume which primarily indexes Scripture and the other literature referenced from the Greek and Jewish worlds. It ends with a curious “Strong to Goodrick-Kohlenberger Number Conversion Chart” (see below). All five volumes fit into an attractive cardboard box.

Volume one begins with Silva’s brief, 10-page introduction and description of the work, accenting the changes in this version. There follows abbreviations, a list of contributors (which are no longer given at the end of each entry), and a topical List of Concepts arranged alphabetically: “Abolish, Nullify” to “Madness (cf. Astonishment; Think),” to “Zeal.” Very helpfully, this topical list is included at the beginning of each of the four volumes (not the fifth index volume) and is marked out with a gray stripe at the edge to make it very easy to find. This List of Concepts is needed because Silva has completely re-arranged this dictionary around Greek words presented alphabetically rather than around English topical words.

Each volume contains entries of lead Greek words and sometimes many others subordinated to it. For example, under δύο (*duo*, “two”), one finds seven other Greek words included in that entry such as δίστομος (*distomos*, “double-edged”) and δωδέκατος (*dôdekatos*, “twelfth”). This means that to find δίστομος (*distomos*) you would need to look it up in the index volume (volume 5); you will not find the entry alphabetically. This is not a terrible problem, and an electronic version of the work will probably make use of this work more efficient. The entry for δύο (*duo*) “two” does have a nice, brief discussion of the connotations of “two-edged” in a place like Revelation 19:13 where Christ wields a “sharp, two-edged sword” (1.784). However, one wants a bit more on military technology and swords to understand the “feel” this weapon gave to the original audience. For example, we are told in NIDNTTE that “two-edged” connotes the sword is effective for stabbing (the Roman army’s specialty), but it can also be used with either a forehand or backhand swing and is therefore a *supremely* efficient, dangerous, and terrifying weapon in the hands of a hard-charging horseman. The treatment in NIDNTTE is helpful for being so brief, but more could be said.

Each entry in NIDNTTE contains at least a paragraph each for the lead Greek word’s use in earlier Greek and Jewish literature before surveying its use in the NT and then briefly discussing the other words included under this head. For example, ἀκούω (*akouô*, “I hear”) includes seven other words from the same root (ἀκοή, διακούω, εισακούω, ἐπακούω, παρακούω, παρακοή, and προακούω). This is like an English dictionary which has one entry for “author” that also includes discussion of “authority,” “unauthorized,” “reauthorize,” and “authoritarian.” Sometimes the words under one entry have little to do with one another in meaning except a shared origin. Despite Silva’s best efforts, NIDNTTE is still susceptible to “being misused” by those who want to define terms around their root or to illegitimately inject meaning into one term from a different

word that has a common origin.

What should be clear is that one does not use NIDNTTE as a Greek lexicon to replace those of Danker (BDAG) or Liddell-Scott (LSJ). It does not include all the NT Greek words, and it is not arranged for this purpose. Instead, because of the topical index, NIDNTTE can provide an interesting session of study of biblical words and concepts. For example, the entry “Height/Depth” lists four Greek words but cross references to “Above/Below” (with five Greek words), Heaven (another five Greek words), and Hell (six Greek words and further reference to concepts Death, Judge, Fire, Punishment, and Satan). Or take the concept “Possessions.” This topic alone lists twenty-eight Greek words spanning seventy-three pages and connects to other concepts such as “Avarice,” “Desire,” “Need,” “Poor,” and “Tax” with their own Greek terms and more cross references. One could spend a profitable day just browsing around here.

In the end, this reference tool will appeal to those who want a relatively quick and accessible alternative to the classic *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT; “Kittel’s”).¹ I should also note that there are many references to Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words in NIDNTTE which are not transliterated but instead have reference to a number in Zondervan’s equivalent of the old Strong’s concordance numbers giving original words behind the NIV. This means that the reader who is weak in biblical languages will have to buy other Zondervan titles to do thorough research; though I wonder how much profit would be derived from it by readers without at least a fair grasp of these languages. Furthermore, there are many references to scholarly books and articles in the body and select bibliographies for each entry in German, French, and Spanish, as well as in English.

I have enormous respect for Moisés Silva and the NIDNTTE represents a huge investment of work on his part. It is certainly a significant improvement on the earlier incarnation. I must admit, though, that I myself will probably not use it. TDNT still seems a much better resource despite its well-documented methodological problems simply because of the sheer volume of extra-biblical material it provides.

I also long for one resource that is still needed despite some passing attempts in NIDNTTE: a really sound and complete reference work for Greek synonyms and antonyms which includes words not found in the NT but which the NT authors would have been likely to have known. Access to these words are easily recovered from literary sources and even more directly from over one million extant Greek inscriptions that have hardly been touched by lexicographers for study of Greek words. Until such a truly significant and needed resource for Greek students and Bible interpreters comes along, NIDNTTE will serve as a fairly helpful starting point for those launching into their study of Greek and the theology of the NT.

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¹ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., trans. and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–78).

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Biblical Interpretation and Doctrinal Formulation in the Reformed Tradition: Essays in Honor of James De Jong *edited by Arie C. Leder & Richard A. Muller*

by Martin Emmrich

Biblical Interpretation and Doctrinal Formulation in the Reformed Tradition: Essays in Honor of James De Jong, edited by Arie C. Leder and Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014, xvii + 338 pages, \$25.00, paper.

How has the Reformed tradition come to be? More precisely, given its commitment to theologically precise formulation, how can its trajectory from biblical exegesis to dogmatic statement be traced? This festschrift of fourteen articles in honor of James De Jong attempts to provide an eclectic answer to the inquiry by examining a group of theologians and philosophers spanning a chronological spectrum from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. It is impossible to provide a fair appraisal of all the essays, the first of which consists of an appreciation of De Jong's life and work as a theologian and president of Calvin Theological Seminary. A brief synopsis of some of the contributions will have to suffice.

The introductory honorific essay is followed by four studies relating to Calvin. Joel Beeke's investigation into Calvin's notion of the doctorate as a proper ecclesiastical office, yielding a fourfold ministry of pastor, teacher (cf. Eph. 4:11, "pastor *and* teacher"), elder, and deacon, explores the Reformer's influence on the Dutch Reformed tradition. The article raises questions of acute relevance for the contemporary Reformed church, which harbors a schizophrenic attitude with respect to the doctorate. Is a professor of a theological institution a free agent in the kingdom of God, not unlike an NHL star, or does such a person hold a formal ecclesiastical teaching office with all the responsibilities and accountability that such a calling implies? In our contemporary Reformed circles, we are neither here nor there, failing to adopt a formal teaching office, yet lacking the courage to jettison the notion completely. Beeke's article furnishes a fine reminder that the doctoral office remains firmly anchored in biblical exegesis, such as Calvin's, and that despite its decline in the Dutch tradition and elsewhere, the Reformed church would do well in resolving one of its current problems.

Muller's essay interacts with Bouwsma's assessment of Calvin's sermons and commentaries. Contrary to Bouwsma, Muller finds Calvin's sermons ripe with amplifications and rhetorical extrapolations, while his commentaries evince a notably sparse and utilitarian style. Calvin's sermons show his awareness of the needs of a less educated audience, which translates into a homiletical rhetoric that serves the interests of the hearer's edification. Arguably, as Muller points out, his sermonic rhetoric can be compared to the rhetoric of the biblical text itself, insofar as its patterns of speech and argument often do without the most flowery and eloquent oration for the sake of a clear communication of the divine message. In particular, preachers of the Word, who may be tempted by wanting to sound smart and educated rather than to set aside their own agenda for the benefit of the church, can emulate Calvin's practice.

For most readers, "Calvin's Lectures on Zechariah: Textual Notes" (Al Wolters), may only be of antiquarian interest, inasmuch as the essay deals predominantly with textual criticism. This is also a contribution that could come with the warning, "Don't read if your Latin is rusty," not to speak of those who never had the privilege of earning a *Latinum*.

Rather interesting exegetical details are reviewed in Stanglin's study of Calvin's interpretation of the "Maccabean Psalms." Stanglin places the Reformer in a time-honored tradition reaching from Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 340) to the Antiochene Father Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) and to a number of early and late medieval exegetes who assigned a Maccabean *Sitz im Leben* for Psalms 44, 74, 79, 85, 106, 123, and 129. Yet, although Calvin followed in the steps of his predecessors on a number of counts (most notably Psalm 44), he also disagreed with them, refusing to ascribe any of the said psalms to a tenth-century author. He believed them to be the products of the second-century Jewish community under the persecution of Antiochus IV. Such a late date raises the question of the so-called "silent period" or the cessation of the prophetic Spirit since the fifth century BC. Calvin himself based his conclusion on a strict grammatical exegesis, as he saw it. The use of the past tense, so Calvin says, indicates that the text relates a past experience, not a future event. Calvin's argument cannot be ruled out, but there are biblical examples, such as the prophets Daniel and Zechariah (think only of Daniel 11), who did in fact predict future events in virtually historical terms. It therefore seems that his exegesis is ruled as much by the presupposition that predictive prophecy cannot or does not contain concrete historical details as it is by grammatical analysis. The presupposition itself can be traced to the Reformer's concern for application. If a Psalm relates what appears to be an actual life experience (as in the Maccabean persecution), a proper identification of the *Sitz im Leben* is the necessary foundation for an application of the text to the reader's own situation. Calvin's concern for proper historical grounding when seeking to contextualize a biblical text remains an important hermeneutical principle. The question is whether Calvin or his predecessors have in fact succeeded in demonstrating a Maccabean background for the Psalms in question.

Mark J. Larson's contribution deals with the Italian Reformed theologian Peter Vermigli's (1499–1562) position that a just war has three constituents—proper authority, a just cause, and right intention. Vermigli is responsible for developing Reformed political thought in the sixteenth century, a time in which the question of the church's authority in relation to the state was heavily debated. Vermigli's work, Larson argues,

shows that the Protestant Reformation did not hasten the decline of Scholasticism, as it draws on Aquinas's Thomist tradition.

I wish to highlight two of the remaining essays. For one, Jay Shim's early seventeenth-century treatment of the interpretation of Christ's descent into Hades is of great interest because the Apostle's Creed's claim, "He (Jesus Christ) descended into hell," is one that the average church member hears often enough in our services. It stands to reason that not everyone who is used to reciting it has a clear understanding of what it means. The article reveals how nuanced the understanding of seventeenth-century theologians (Broughton, Lightfoot, Ussher) was in regards to this article of the faith. Bringing to bear linguistic, textual, and cultural considerations, they were able to afford an interpretation that differed greatly from the dogma of the Catholic Church. Hades (the underlying Greek term for "hell") was thus not seen as a descent into the realm of the damned, but as the first act of exaltation: in his soul Christ, having paid the penalty for our sins, entered paradise, while his body was laid in the grave. Hence, Jesus' promise to the thief on the cross, "*Today* you shall be with me in paradise," meant what it said.

Finally, John Bolt's article chronicles a tragic case of ecclesiastical failure in three acts from the twentieth century. "Herman Hoeksema Was Right" revisits the CRC's 1924 Synod ruling on common grace. It was the common grace controversy that eventually led to the suspension of Herman Hoeksema by Classis Grand Rapids East. It would be unfair to say that the essay shows Reformed church polity at its worst, but it does serve as a stark reminder that even with the best of intentions (which must be assumed on both sides of the common grace conflict), the truth does not always win. This last of the contributions thus demonstrates that failure to ground dogmatic construction in sound biblical exegesis is a tale of one bad turn deserving another. May our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us!

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Servant Poetry

by Giles Fletcher (1548–1611)

Crucify Him!

Frail multitude, whose giddy law is list.
And best applause is windy flattering;
Most like the breath of which it doth consist,
No sooner blown but as soon vanishing,
As much desired as little profiting;
That makes the men that have it oft as light
As those that give it; which the proud invite,
And fear: the bad man's friend, the good man's hypocrite.

It was but now their sounding clamours sung,
'Blessed is he that comes from the Most High.'
And all the mountains with Hosanna rung;
And now, 'Away with him-away!' they cry.
And nothing can be heard but 'Crucify!'
It was but now the crown itself they gave,
And golden name of King unto him gave;
And now, no king but only Caesar they will have.

It was but now they gathered blooming may.
And of his arms disrobed the branching tree,
To strow with boughs and blossoms all thy way,
And now, the branchless trunk a cross for thee,
And may, dis-mayed, thy coronet must be.
It was but now they were so kind to throw
Their own best garments where thy feet should go,
And now, thyself they strip, and bleeding wounds they show.