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Reformation
& Revival



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Book Reviews

Letters on Revival

Ebenezer B. Porter

Brooklyn, NY: Linde Publications (1992).

316 pages, paperback, \$6.95.

The subject of revival is so multifaceted one scarcely knows where to begin. Through all the ages of the church on earth there have been special seasons when the Holy Spirit has come down in power to renew the church's obedience to God's Word, give impetus to missions work, and to bring many unsaved to a living faith in Christ. Church historian Earle Cairns has observed that revivals may be local, regional, or international; general revivals usually follow periods of spiritual declension, and when anointed preachers once again fearlessly proclaim the biblical message of law and gospel (cf. Earle E. Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor*).

During times of declension God prepared His church for revival by restoring the doctrines of grace to the church (see Martyn Lloyd-Jones' book, *Revival*, Crossway Books). One generation of godly men may lay the foundation for revival in a later generation (see Edward N. Kirk's *Lectures on Revival*, 1874). God may use ordained ministers such as Whitefield and Wesley or laymen such as the Norwegian, Hauge, to spearhead revival. The Lutheran, O. Hallesby, pondered the mystery of revival when he wrote:

It is generally conceded to be an incontrovertible fact that there has been, and is, very little spiritual awakening as a result of the preaching of the ministers of Norway [ca. 1920s]. . . . When I see the feeble spiritual awakenings which result from the activity of Norwegian theologians, who on the whole are both capable and conscientious, then the question which arises, Why is there so little spiritual awakening resulting from ministerial preaching? becomes very serious and humiliating to me indeed. . . . If we desire

spiritual awakenings, if we pray for such awakenings, if there is a cry in the souls of our pastors for spiritual awakenings, why then cannot God make use of us to bring them about? Is there something about our *training*, is there something about our *preaching*, or is there something about the *life* we live that hinders God from using us?

I know very well the gift of spiritual awakening . . . cannot be and is not given to every preacher. But to us theologians it is an exceedingly humiliating fact that God during the past 125 years has had to seek evangelistic preachers that He could use outside of our ministerial circles as a rule (*How Can the Word of God Be Preached So As to Result in Awakening and Conversion?*, pp. 180, 182).

James M. Boice has observed this same lack in the pastoral ministry with respect to revivals. In an article titled "The Great Need for Revival Preaching," he wrote:

I am told that the doctrines of grace cannot be preached today, that such teaching will drive listeners away. That may be. At any rate, I am sure that at least one of these things will happen. Either these truths will drive the minister away, or there will be a great awakening as there has been at many different points in church history.

Some ask, "Where is revival today?" I reply, "Where are the faithful teachers of the whole counsels of the Word of God?" Let the angry God be proclaimed, as well as the God of love, and men's hearts will be stirred to repentance. Let the sovereign God be proclaimed, and some will bow before Him. They have done it before. They will do it again. Preach doctrine, and many will, out of a true sense of need, flee to the Savior (*Christianity Today*, December 20, 1974).

About 1830 some students at Andover Seminary formed a Revival Association to gather information on revivals. A request was made to President Ebenezer Porter, which was heartily responded to in a positive manner. Porter wrote letters to the students on the subject of revival and they

were published in *The Spirit of the Pilgrims*. Wrote Porter:

I have deemed it all important that ministers, and those who are preparing to become ministers, should be revival men; I mean, men who understand the subject of revivals, who enter into it with a warm and decided interest, and whose preaching and influence, in all respects shall be adopted to promote revivals.

During the national prayer awakening of 1858 these letters were published in book form by the Congregational Board of Publication. The preface to that book stated:

The ability and piety of Dr. Porter, and his extensive and experimental acquaintance with revivals, marked him as the man eminently qualified to give instruction and facts on the subject. . . . They contain statements, examples, and instructions equally applicable now as when first published, and will be very appropriate and useful in all seasons of religious interest. The name of the author is a sufficient guarantee of their value, and renders any further commendation superfluous.

Dr. Porter, though renowned in his own day, is buried in antiquity. As Solomon observed, "There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow" (Eccl. 1:11). The number of prestigious calls he received but declined tell us much about Porter's popularity with his contemporaries: calls to serve as pastor of important churches in Albany and New Haven; a call to succeed Timothy Dwight as Professor of Divinity at Yale College; calls to the presidency of the University of Vermont, Hamilton College, Middlebury College, University of Georgia, South Carolina College, Dartmouth and Andover Seminary, which he accepted in 1827. From 1812 he served as Bartlett Professor of Pulpit Eloquence at Andover.

As a Connecticut pastor Porter's abundant labors in the

earlier stages of the Second Great Awakening (1804-5) so shattered his health that he needed nearly a year to recuperate. His careful study of the revival reports published in the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* provided him an excellent background to write authoritatively on the awakening. Of his preaching a notice in William B. Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit* says:

When he came to the application, when to impress his subject was what he undertook to do; he often put forth the grandest power of eloquence. I have often gone from his preaching with my heart rung, literally rung, by the grasp he had upon it; and it was some time before the blood flowed freely in its channels.

Dr. Porter wrote his revival letters out of a serious concern for the well-being of the church. He believed that the "New Measures" of evangelism, being debated during this time and sweeping the field of evangelism, would have calamitous and far-reaching effects upon the life of the church, resulting in many false conversions and large accessions of the unsaved to the church. Dr. Porter wrote:

What, then, if we heedlessly admit to our fellowship and continue in it, unconverted men, what hope can we entertain that God will bless us? If any considerable proportion of our communicants should be of this character, what is to become of our genuine revivals? Let the Spirit of God be withdrawn from us, and leave us to fanatical excitements and human contrivances to multiply nominal Christians, and then, indeed, we may have "human converts," and many accessions to the numbers of the church, but the glory of our Zion will be departed; and a few such seasons of ingathering in any church will be sufficient to render it an utter desolation. . . . If I do not mistake the signs of the times, the danger of our churches now is, that unconverted men in great numbers will be admitted to their fellowship, hoping that they are Christians. Should this apprehension prove well grounded,

another century will disclose the calamitous results.

And so it did. What consequences will *our* labors have for the church in the future for good or for bad? Porter's book will go a long way in helping us understand the answer to this question and in helping steer the church and its leadership back to the "old ways."

Besides Porter's *Letters on Revival* this reprint edition includes an additional 150 pages of material by men such as Theodore L. Cuyler, who wrote over 3,200 articles for publication in his lifetime and made more than 25,000 pastoral visits in his ministry; Horatius Bonar on the characteristics of revival men; D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on the doctrines of revival; and an essay by O. Hallesby titled "How Can the Word of God Be Preached So As to Result in Awakening and Conversion?" There are also studies on the revival ministries of Asahel Nettleton; Andover Seminary, its creed and its fall; early American ministerial training; the Unitarian defection of New England churches; and much, much more.

Kurt Linde

Brooklyn, New York

The Great Invitation

Erroll Hulse

16-18 High Street, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 9FQ, England (1986).

184 pages, paperback.

Ah, the wonder, the glory, and the power of the gospel! Whether you are a seasoned Christian or minister of the Word, or a young disciple of Christ who is just beginning your ministry or walk with God, this book will not only challenge you, it will warm your heart for the beauty of the

gospel as well as urge you to the faithful proclaiming of it.

Erroll Hulse, the author of several books and a pastor in England, realizes that this book is controversial and may shock many who have not considered the use of the invitation system. His approach, however, reflects his pastoral heart, gently leading while he also firmly plods and directs, all based upon the authoritative guidelines of Scripture. From the outset he attempts to graciously establish a bridge for the traveler who may disagree with him. In the preface he writes:

... I would like to express my sympathy for those who may be shocked that the "appeal" should be challenged. To reduce the sense of shock that some may feel, I would remind them that for well over 1800 years the Holy Spirit completed successfully all his work of saving sinners without this method. It was only with the advent of Charles Finney (1792-1875) that the "appeal" as an organized method really got under way.

When one begins to wrestle with this most important issue, he is confronted with what our author so well articulates:

Writing this book has been like walking a tightrope across the Niagara Falls. On the one side is the chasm of darkness which results from a wrong view of God's sovereignty, and on the other are the racking torrents of error which follow shallow views of the state of man in sin (p. 1).

It is my view he walks this tightrope masterfully, maintaining great integrity with the Scriptures.

He sets out then to accomplish a two-fold purpose. The first objective of his work is to show that there is no greater or more important invitation than the gospel which is anticipated in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. How often have you heard it said: To believe in the confes-

sional statements which adhere to Calvinism (or what we might call the doctrines of grace), one will soon lose his zeal for evangelism? Now, I'm afraid that charge is true too often. However, when you read these five chapters, you will not be able to make such a charge. Indeed, you will be provoked not only to see that the gospel is an indescribable gift but also that there should be no inhibitions in proclaiming the gospel of the good news of salvation in the person of Christ. Hulse takes on the struggle many younger followers of sovereign grace debate, and asserts that there are no doctrines in the Bible which in any way limit the free offers and invitations of the gospel. Perhaps his words best describe his concern:

If there is the danger of denying the sovereignty of God, there is the equal risk that we accept God's sovereign power in an unbalanced way. We might fall into the trap of saying, "Ah well, they can't repent, anyway! So what's the use of our expending effort on evangelism?"

The answer to that error is to realize that God uses means to achieve His purpose.

Therefore anything less than wholehearted enthusiasm about evangelism is wrong. How can we sustain our motivation and drive for evangelism? One way is to observe the fullness and glory of the invitations of the gospel. The Holy Spirit employs these as a means to draw prodigals back home (p.16).

In chapters 3 and 4, the great invitation of the gospel is illustrated from several key passages. Beginning with Isaiah 55 in chapter 3 and several New Testament references in chapter 4, he nurtures his walk across the tightrope without falling into the waters below. I was left with two reactions: 1) Lord, thank You for electing grace, and 2) Lord, what a privilege to proclaim the gospel to all men and urge them to

“come” to the Savior.

All of us somewhere along the way have debated with ourselves the principal doctrinal issues which lie behind the presentation and application of the gospel to all who hear it. In chapter 5, titled, “The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation,” these key issues are raised: 1) Do sinners have the right to believe? 2) Is man really responsible? 3) Is God sincere in His invitations? 4) How do we reconcile the doctrines of grace with the Great Invitation? 5) Does God love everyone? 6) Does God prepare sinners for the new birth?

In my opinion the first half of this book is not only germane to the larger topic at hand, but it also would be a great resource to place in the hands of someone who is being introduced to the doctrines of grace and raises the questions most of us struggled with when first exposed to them. When I finished this section of the book (chapters 1–5), the response within was, Oh, the glory of the gospel.

The second part of the book (chapters 6–11, including two appendixes) focuses on the author’s second objective—showing that there is no need to resort to methods that do not have the sanction of Scripture. Although the appeal system (calling people to the front to express their willingness to accept Christ for salvation, rededication, etc.) is more prominent in America, the author, an Englishman, has taken great pains to be objective. He refers to several who use the system and their explanation or defense of it. Primarily, he refers to two books: *The Effective Invitation*, by R. Alan Streett (Billy Graham and W.A. Criswell sanction this work); and, *Stand Up and Be Counted*, by R.T. Kendall, the pastor of the well-known Westminster Chapel in London, England.

Objectivity is maintained by a review of history and returning always to examine the method by the Bible. After bringing the reader through years of interesting church

history, this summary statement follows:

... It would seem that revivals varying in intensity continued towards the end of the eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth century, and that a variety of methods were used to gather the distressed in order to counsel them. We should emphasize that the purpose was to advise and help those who were distressed. There are no reports of methods employed to encourage people to come forward at the conclusion of meetings (p. 93).

Finney, however, introduced methodology based upon his theology. To him conversion was the direct result of moral persuasion by the appropriate use of means (p. 94). Although his position was resisted by many, Hulse demonstrates how his methodology was patterned by later popular evangelists of the day (D. L. Moody, Sam Jones, R. A. Torrey, and Billy Sunday). You will find the chapter on the history of invitations informative and intriguing.

This methodology acknowledging the various forms of the invitation (some not as extreme as others) is called into question tactfully, yet firmly, by:

- 1) Asking if the appeal is a new evangelical sacrament (chapter 7);
- 2) Presenting four great preachers who did not use the invitation system (William Perkins, Jonathan Edwards, C.H. Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd-Jones (chapter 10);
- 3) Examining the most critical issue of all—the new birth (chapter 9);
- 4) Demonstrating how the “appeal” is harmful (chapter 11);
- 5) Giving some examples of invitation preaching which the reader will find very useful. These are brief and drawn both from historic preachers as well as a present day model (Appendix 2).

I recommend this book. One mark of Erroll Hulse’s writing is his ability to tie together in a readable and interesting

format the historic, the present-day examples and the authority of God's Word. Indeed, we need books like this that are not merely academic but also speak to the heart. The God the author knows is worthy of all honor because he represents the God of the Bible. The words of Francis Scott Key represent the theme of this book:

Lord, with glowing heart I'd praise thee,
for the bliss thy love bestows,
For the pard'ning grace that saves me,
and the peace that from it flows:
Help, O God, my weak endeavor;
this dull soul to rapture raise:
Thou must light the flame,
or never can my love be warmed to praise.

Praise thy Savior God that drew thee to that cross,
new life to give, held a blood-sealed pardon to thee,
bade thee look to him and live:
Praise the grace whose threats alarmed thee,
roused thee from thy fatal ease,
Praise the grace whose promise warm'd thee,
Praise the grace that whispered peace.

John Sale

Keeneyville, Illinois

Christ the Lord

Michael Horton, Editor

Grand Rapids: Baker Book House (1992).

240 pages, paperback, \$11.95.

Oh, no! Not another polemical work in a generation that so desperately needs more love and less doctrine. Isn't it true that "doctrine divides while love builds up?" But who takes the time and effort to define love properly? We must admit, this is not an age of doctrinal precision and doctrinal

concern, in the light of such simplistic analogies as that stated above.

But then a book like this one, from a strongly biblical and Reformation standpoint, comes along challenging many of our popular notions and mistaken doctrinal beliefs. Horton writes, in response to the views of both Zane Hodges and John MacArthur, a major work for all of us to consider carefully.

Hodges, author of *Absolutely Free!: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Zondervan, 1989), wrote in response to John MacArthur's earlier book, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan, 1988). Hodges believes that MacArthur has added something to faith, thus making salvation to be by faith plus works. This charge is very serious. MacArthur had earlier charged that Hodges destroyed the meaning of repentance and saving faith by a thousand qualifications, thus making faith to be something far less than the term means in the New Testament. Hodges, wishing to argue for what he believes is the position of the Protestant Reformation and the New Testament, reasons that MacArthur, and other "Lordship" preachers, *add* to faith, thus making salvation to be by faith *plus* works. MacArthur attacks Hodges' position by saying that Hodges separates being saved by faith in Christ from "making Christ one's Lord" at a later point in the Christian's life. This means, in MacArthur's view, that Jesus is "Savior only" for those who do not trust Him later on as Lord. This is where the names used in this present debate actually originate, names like "Lordship Salvation." MacArthur insists that a person must come to Jesus as both Savior and Lord and begin to work out the dynamics of what it means to be under His lordship day by day. The idea of coming to Christ as Savior "only" is untenable, he reasons.

Michael Horton, editor of this helpful volume, has searched this debate out very intensely. He has read both

MacArthur and Hodges with considerable care. He has criticisms of both parties in this debate, but particularly displays the fatal error in Hodges' thought. He attempts to correct MacArthur at several points, especially regarding his definitions of faith and repentance (he at times treats them as synonymous terms in the Scriptures). Horton tells us that he has met with men from MacArthur's staff, and that future editions of *The Gospel According to Jesus*, as well as the newer volume, *Faith Works* (Word, 1992), will correct these mistakes.

Horton's argument is as follows. In the introduction he is concerned about clarity in preaching the gospel. He uses Hodges' and MacArthur's books to illustrate the point he makes. "What is the gospel?" That is the real question being debated, and Horton begins with definition. Further, he asks, "What is faith?" Then, "What are justification and sanctification, and wherein do they differ and agree?" The answers he gives are those of the classical Reformation position and are plainly given and tightly argued.

The book has two equal divisions. The first section is an exposition of Scripture, showing plainly that Luther and Calvin, the major Protestant Reformers, were in full agreement on these matters, and that their views were in harmony with those of the Scriptures. These men discovered the gospel, especially the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Their precision in stating these matters is needed in our time, argues Horton. They said, "Salvation is by grace alone, by Christ alone, and through faith alone." In this section of the book, Kim Riddlebarger answers the important question, "What Is Faith?" Robert Strimple deals with "Regeneration," while Horton includes an essay by himself dealing very thoroughly with "Union with Christ." Rick Ritchie writes on "The Law According to Jesus." Each of these chapters is filled with careful scholarship and makes a vital contribution to this whole debate.

The second section of this volume gives us "Lessons from the Past." Here we encounter Calvin's response to the Council of Trent, where Roman Catholicism sought to repel the gospel message of the Reformers. The historic struggles between Pelagius and Augustine are also discussed. One of the more interesting movements in our time has been the recovery of Puritan theology. Just how did the Puritans deal with doctrinal matters that touch upon the "Lordship" debate? I found Paul Schaefer's chapter titled "An American Tale," to read like a modern saga, rich with insight and pastoral help.

This book calls for clarity at a time when so little of it is evident in the present North American scene. The late J. Gresham Machen said that revivals were often born in doctrinal controversies and that these controversies would still be around when the revivals subsided. Horton helps prepare us for dealing with a major doctrinal controversy of our time, one that must be addressed if we would desire true revival.

Recently an 80-year-old man told a pastor friend of mine that he was sure he was going to heaven because his pastor had told him he would. Could this be true with many in our day? Would not a heaven-sent awakening bring many to realize that they needed to repent and believe the gospel genuinely?

In preparation for reformation and revival in our time I urge pastors and concerned church leaders to read and ponder this book very carefully. It could be a major contribution to the recovery of the gospel needed in our generation.

Drew Garner
Houston, Texas

The Daughter of Puritanism and the Mother of Methodism: Susanna Wesley

Arnold A. Dallimore
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House (1993).
176 pages, \$9.95.

In the city of London, England, is a cemetery which is precious to all who cherish liberty of conscience and the untrammled preaching of God's Word—Bunhill Fields. Precious because buried here are many men and women who went outside the camp of the Established Church for the sake of worshiping God according to their conscience and their understanding of Scripture. Some 120,000 were buried in this cemetery between 1665 and January 1854. Many of them were Baptist worthies, such as William Kiffin (1616-1701), John Gill (1697-1771) and John Reynolds (1730-92). Now, if you visit the cemetery you will notice two graves which look almost new. They have obviously been kept up over the years, and have been preserved from the state of disrepair that characterizes most of the graves in the cemetery. One is that of John Bunyan (1628-88), the famous author of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The other is that of Susanna Wesley (1669-1742), well-known because of her two famous sons, John Wesley (1703-91), and Charles Wesley (1708-88). In the words on her gravestone: "She was the mother of nineteen children, of whom, the most eminent were the Revs. John and Charles Wesley."

But she deserves to be known in her own right. In this new biography of Susanna, Arnold Dallimore, formerly pastor of Cottam (Ontario) Baptist Church and author of the definitive biography of the evangelist George Whitefield (1714-70), tells us her story.

The biography is extremely readable and evidently aimed at reaching those readers who may have little knowledge of

the eighteenth century, but who are nonetheless interested in reading about how God worked in the lives of believers of that era. Dallimore especially details her Puritan background. She was the twenty-fifth child of Samuel Annesley (1620-96), one of the most eminent Puritans of the late 1600s. Her marriage to the Rev. Samuel Wesley (1662-1735), and the lives of the nine of her nineteen children who survived infancy (three sons and six daughters) are recounted. Her marriage was sadly not what it should have been: her minister husband on occasion acted very boorishly towards her and their daughters. It is also sad that, for the most part, her daughters' marriages were poor, marred affairs, not generally distinguished by deep conjugal affection. John Wesley's marriage to Molly Vazeille (1781) was also an unmitigated disaster, and brought neither him nor Molly any real lasting happiness. As Dallimore notes: "The married lives of all of Susanna's children, with the exception of Charles and to some extent of Samuel (her eldest son who died in 1739) and Anne, were marked by difficulty" (p.141).

The story of the marriage of Mehetabel (1692-1751), called Hetty within the family circle, was particularly tragic. In a chapter titled "The Tragedy of Daughter Hetty" (pp.109-19), Samuel Wesley is shown at his worst. Hetty had become pregnant out of wedlock. Her father regarded her as "something untouchable" (p. 116). To avoid further dishonor being thrust upon himself and his family, he decided to marry her off as quickly as he could. Entirely disregarding Hetty's feelings, he offered a coarse journeyman plumber named William Wright his daughter's hand in marriage. Susanna is said to have declared, "To think of Hetty and William Wright together makes my flesh creep" (p. 116), but her husband was not to be deterred from his decision. Hetty and William were thus duly married. Although she sought to make the best of a bad situation, her marriage was the source of deep tribulation to her, especially when Wright began drinking

heavily. What hurt Hetty even more was her father's utter refusal to forgive her or to show her any sign of compassion. Despite the fact that Hetty wrote to her father begging him to forgive her, Samuel "went to his grave without the least word of reconciliation to his erring, but deeply wronged, daughter" (p. 119).

Samuel, of course, was not wholly devoid of good qualities, but it was quite clearly Susanna who had the abiding affection of her children and who strove throughout her long life to put their best interests first. After a period of estrangement between Susanna and Samuel early on in their marriage, "she devoted all her time and strength to her children" in the hope of bringing them all to a saving knowledge of Christ (p. 57). To what extent she succeeded in this endeavor is an open question. John and Charles, of course, were greatly used of God after their conversions in 1738. Yet John could state later in his life that he found it "strange so few of my relations should be of any use to me in the work of God" (p. 136). One reason for this state of affairs certainly must have been the hypocrisy of the father, a Church of England clergyman, who acted at times in such an unchristian manner towards his wife and children.

Another reason may have been Susanna's confusion regarding the nature of salvation. In the raising of her children, Dallimore asserts that "she failed . . . to mention the substitutionary nature of Christ's death and the receiving of its merits by faith" (p. 61). By 1738 her thinking was definitely a lot clearer. In a letter she wrote to son Charles on October 19, 1738, she plainly declared: "Jesus is the Holy Physician of souls; his blood the only salve that can heal a wounded conscience" (p. 159).

Yet, according to Dallimore, there was still a certain amount of confusion. She had, for instance, little concept of the idea of the new birth (p. 161). To make matters even more complicated, an experience she had in January 1740

was regarded by her son Charles as a conversion experience, prior to which he believed his mother to have been in "a legal night of seventy years" (p. 162). She considered the experience—in which she came to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that "God for Christ's sake had forgiven me all my sins" (p. 162)—as a spiritual restoration. In fact, as John A. Newton has pointed out in his magisterial study, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), Susanna's last years were spent frequently wrestling with bouts of spiritual depression, which may well have resulted from her being widowed in 1735.

All in all Dallimore has given us a tantalizing portrait of a very strong-minded, independent woman, who throughout her life displayed great patience, that rarest fruit of the Spirit, and who had "the authentic marks of spiritual greatness upon her" (Newton, *Susanna Wesley*, p. 207).

Michael A.G. Haykin

Gormley, Ontario

Studies in Theology

Loraine Boettner

Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company

(1947, fifteenth printing—1989).

351 pages, paperback, \$7.95.

Some fairly modern theological writings are such classics that they need to be reviewed and recommended over and over again. Such is the case with Loraine Boettner's *Studies in Theology*. This volume is a compilation of several articles penned at different times by Boettner. It contains five significant studies of essential issues in systematic theol-

ogy. With great skill and precision Boettner addresses “The Inspiration of the Scriptures,” “Christian Supernaturalism,” “The Trinity,” “The Person of Christ,” and “The Atonement.”

In each chapter Boettner addresses a variety of concerns. His writing style and presentation are clear enough to appeal to the interested lay reader, yet he also provides a very valuable resource for those with a more in-depth scholastic interest. This volume is one pastors and seminary students should study carefully. Boettner has written other helpful volumes which include: *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, *Roman Catholicism*, and *Immortality*.

In his chapter on “Inspiration” Boettner demonstrates great precision in expressing and analyzing the various views. He personally defends the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration (i.e., each and every word is fully God-breathed), and adheres to infallibility (since it has God for its author, it can not err) and inerrancy (it is *actually* without error) in the original autographs. He delineates the idea of dictation and recognizes that generally speaking the Word of God was not dictated, though there are areas of dictation within it.

Boettner’s discussion and explanation of *alleged errors* are insightful and helpful. His precisely reasoned arguments will be of great aid to those who seriously desire to understand this area of ongoing discussion within Christian circles.

The material in the section on “Christian Supernaturalism” is excellent. This reviewer was impressed with the clear treatment of the information and with the author’s orthodox convictions. He expressed how every person must make a decision concerning the natural and supernatural world. He also identifies evangelicals and conservatives as supernaturalists while concluding that liberals and modernists are anti-supernaturalists.

The importance of his concern is demonstrated by the conclusion that modernism’s antagonism toward both the

miraculous and the fall of man is ultimately an attack upon the Christian doctrine of redemption. Although many in the liberal and modernist tradition claim to be theists Boettner indicates that belief in theism automatically requires a belief in the supernatural (p. 52). He states, “It is the height of inconsistency for the Modernist to admit the existence of God, and yet deny the miracles recorded in Scripture.”

In our time, Boettner’s insights on the subject of supernaturalism are must reading for a serious Bible student. He presents detailed information on the relationship between theism and miracles. Equally impressive is his treatment of the genuineness of revelation in the context of the miracle accounts. It is helpful that he also presents a section distinguishing biblical miracles from *alleged* Roman Catholic miracles.

The chapter on the Trinity is sixty-one pages of biblical, doctrinal, and historical explanation which provide great clarity of thought concerning this doctrine. Boettner takes the reader through many areas of pertinent information. His discussion of trinitarianism vs. tri-theism is very beneficial. He references Scripture proofs of this doctrine, and his treatment of “The Trinity in the Old Testament” will encourage you to realize the wealth of biblical evidences which clearly support the doctrine. Often consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity is viewed as abstract study. I was impressed with Boettner’s theocentric and soteriologically centered approach. This was especially evident as he presented the *practical* importance of the doctrine.

The most extensive section of the book is on the person of Christ. The author expresses appropriate concern for Christians of this century when he states:

The faith of the Church has been seriously challenged not only from without but from within. The result is that today even among those who call themselves Christians there is

no general agreement either as to who Christ is or as to what He does for our salvation (p. 141).

He concludes that the doctrine of the person of Christ is the most central and basic doctrine of the entire Christian system of truth. Accordingly, he defines Christianity as follows, "Christianity is that redemptive religion that offers salvation from the guilt and corruption of sin through the atoning death of Christ" (p. 141). Therefore, the rejection of the deity of Christ marks one as a non-Christian.

Boettner moves right to the heart of this topic by setting forth the clear biblical teaching of Christ's deity. This is established on the basis of Christ's own testimony in the Scriptures and also on that of the apostles. Biblical evidence of Christ's deity is provided through the helpful explanation of the designation, "The Son of God," as used in reference to Jesus. In his section on the Trinity Boettner gives attention to the terms "Father" and "Son" as applied to God. Boettner provides reinforcement to that treatment in the current section, "The terms 'Father' and 'Son' carry with them not our occidental ideas of, on the one hand, source, being and superiority, and on the other, subordination and dependence, but rather the Semitic and oriental ideas of *likeness or sameness of nature* and equality of being" (p. 152). His conclusion is that the designation, "the Son of God," is to be understood with Semitic consciousness in mind.

Our author also faithfully addresses the titles of Christ, His humanity, His pre-existence and His attributes. Constructive information is also provided concerning Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Extensive treatment is provided concerning Christ's two natures, His incarnation, and His sinlessness. With reference to Christ's sinlessness, Boettner in a straightforward manner sets forth His impeccability: "As a matter of fact, it was impossible for Christ to commit

sin. For in His essential nature He was God, and God cannot sin. This does not mean that He could not be tempted . . ." (p. 211).

As Boettner explains the relationship of the virgin birth of Christ to His divinity and His work of redemption, he indicates the necessity of the virgin birth in its relationship to redemption. He shows that the virgin birth is bound together with other great evangelical truth by a unifying cord.

Boettner provides a significant treatment of "Christ the Messiah of Old Testament Prophecy," and also gives an excellent treatment to Christ's offices as Prophet, Priest, and King. He completes the Christological section of his book with a presentation of erroneous views concerning the person of Christ. This reviewer found this section extremely thorough and informative. It would help any reader to have great precision in his thought.

The final section of the book is a treatment of the doctrine of the atonement. Boettner indicates from the beginning that the two great objectives of the atonement were removal of the curse of man's disobedience through the fall and the restoration of man in God's image and fellowship. Because Christ is God He is set forth as a person of infinite value and dignity. Therefore Boettner understands Christ's suffering and death to be amply sufficient to redeem as many members of the human race as God sees fit to call to Himself in the gospel.

The author understands the atonement to be *necessary* if sin is to be punished, and if the demands of God's justice are met. Boettner promotes the *satisfaction view* of the atonement as the necessarily biblical view. He extensively addresses various pertinent topics in association with this position, including distinguishing between the ideal of commercial and penal debt. He also presents information on the active and passive obedience of Christ and Christ as ransom.

Boettner discusses the *extent* of the atonement in answer to the question of the atonement being designed to render certain the salvation of specific individuals. He shows that Christ's death must do more than merely render possible the salvation of all men. He concludes, persuasively, I believe, that Christ died for only those who are actually saved. He uses terminology concerning the sufficiency and efficiency of Christ's atonement and explains with precision what he means by these terms. He concludes that Calvinists and Arminians both *limit* the atonement but in *different* ways. He states that Calvinists limit the atonement in extent while Arminians limit the atonement in its power or inherent value. "Calvinists limit the atonement quantitatively, but not qualitatively; Arminians limit it qualitatively, but not quantitatively." The author also sees universal benefits in the atonement in the application of common grace to both the elect and nonelect. This section is completed with a presentation of Old Testament ritual and symbolism as well as a discussion of some erroneous theories of the atonement.

This book is a must for any professor, pastor, student, or layperson interested in the essential doctrinal themes presented within it. The book is thought provoking and contains a wealth of information on the various subjects addressed.

Patrick Stewart

St. Charles, Illinois

The Atonement

Albert Barnes

Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship (n.d.)

358 pages, paperback, n.p.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the theology of the Puritans began to lose its hold among Presbyterians and Congregationalists in New England. One reason for this was the rise of the governmental view of the the atonement which was first popularized in England by Hugo Grotius. Many of the followers of Jonathan Edwards, such as Samuel Hopkins, Nathaniel Emmons, and Joseph Bellamy, sowed the seeds of this departure which finally culminated in what became known as the New School Presbyterian movement. Following this new direction theologians such as Edward A. Parks of Andover, Edward Griffin, N. W. Taylor, N. S. S. Beman and Albert Barnes saw the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as not so much a true and proper satisfaction of divine justice but rather an expedient introduced into divine government in the place of the strict execution of law.

I can think of no better way to illustrate Barnes' thoughts on this subject than this quote from his work:

God will always reckon or estimate things as they are. . . . Yet it is also true that we may be treated as if that merit were our own, and that we may avail ourselves of all that Christ has done in honoring the law, and meeting its claims, and enduring such sorrows as would be a proper expression of the Divine estimate of the value of the law and the evils of disobedience, as though all this had been done and suffered by ourselves. This is, if I understand it, the true doctrine of imputation; not that there is any transfer of moral character from us to the Redeemer, or from him to us, and not that God literally reckons or imputes our sins to him as his, or his

righteousness to us as ours, but that his work may be estimated as performed in the place and on the account of sinful men, and that in virtue of that we may be regarded and treated as if it had been performed by ourselves (pp. 314-15).

The import of this view is that the law has essentially never been satisfied and God has not been, properly speaking, appeased or propitiated through atonement. Rather something less than this has happened: God acted at Calvary in a dramatic and cosmic fashion which put Him in a position to set the sinner free. Logically this leads us to believe that the atonement terminates not, as the Bible teaches and the historical church has contended, on God, but upon man. The atonement is necessary for God to govern the world properly. It would not be wise for Him to save without some demonstration of His love for man and His hatred of sin.

In my own view writers such as Beman and Barnes fail to appreciate the truth of union with Christ adequately. That there is a real union between Christ and sinners when He died we should have no doubt. This provided the grounds for God to actually impute (though not actually transfer in the sense of infuse) the sins of believers to His Son. Contrariwise there is a real union between Christ and His people which enables God to credit the righteousness of Christ to them, giving them a perfect standing in His sight.

I have the following note in the flyleaf of my personal copy of this book, which sums up my analysis succinctly:

The author of this book does not understand the doctrine of the atonement, although there are many interesting ideas and helpful illustrations of truth herein. The Scriptures tell us that God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Surely something more is involved in redemption than that God treated Christ badly and treats us well, as if guilt

and righteousness were communicated. In Him we are righteous through a mysterious but, nevertheless, real and proper union.

John F. Thornbury
Winfield, Pennsylvania

It may seem mysterious that God should permit a work of His own holy and blessed Spirit to be accompanied, marred and perverted by errors and abuses. But so it has been from the beginning.

Ashbel Green

When God is about to begin a great work He pours out a spirit of supplication.

Jonathan Edwards

The devil keeps step with God, and when revival comes it is always a mixed work, hard to identify just because so much error, fanaticism and disorder are mixed up in it.

James I. Packer

Revival is not something we have and must seek to keep, but something we lack and must plead to receive.

Arthur Skevington Wood

It may be said that revivals thrive on the Word and the Word is exalted in revivals.

Arthur Skevington Wood

By definition, revival is not meant to last, though it can pass sooner than intended on account of Christians quenching and grieving the Holy Spirit.

Arthur Skevington Wood

... **R**eligion consists so much in affections, as that without holy affection there is no true religion; and no light in the understanding is good, which does not produce holy affection in the heart; no principle or habit in the heart is good, which has no such exercise; and no external fruit is good, which does not proceed from such exercises.

Jonathan Edwards
