

Book reviews

Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Proverbs* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 180 pages, ISBN: 0877849420; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapter 1-15* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 693 pages, ISBN: 0802825451 and Bruce K. Waltke *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 589 pages, ISBN: 0802827764.

One false notion of spirituality that is far too prevalent in evangelicalism is that it pertains to what is non-earthly. The stuff of life—things like work, money, sex, business, and government—are irrelevant to its deliberations. Scripture, of course, will have none of this! One of its best treatments of earthy spirituality is found for us in the book of Proverbs. Hence if we wish to deal “spiritually” with life, we need to take our cue from this magnificent work. But how can we make sense of it? Proverbs is such a strange book to understand! Two authors have recently contributed tools to help us in our study.

Tremper Longman III’s *How to Read Proverbs* provides us with some simple hermeneutical keys for approaching Proverbs. The book is helpfully divided into three major sections, “Understanding Proverbs,” “Reading Proverbs in Context,” and “Following the Themes in Proverbs.” The first section provides a number of introductory discussions on the nature of wisdom, some key metaphors in wisdom language, some basic directions for reading proverbial

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literature, and some discussion of what can be expected from its message. Especially important is Longman's comment that "[a proverb] is putting forward a generally true principle that depends on the right time and circumstances" (47).

The second section discusses a number of key contexts in which the proverbial material is situated. One important context is the wisdom literature of the ancient Near Eastern world that offers some insight into the purpose and nature of wisdom literature. A second context is those books and writings that form the corpus of the biblical genre of wisdom literature. Their form and their message provide insight into the nature of and balance for the message of Proverbs. The narratives of Scripture provide a final context. Longman draws attention particularly to those of Joseph and Daniel, which, he suggests, represent the sage in action. This is an important contribution for the ordinary reader who might not normally connect the aphorisms of Proverbs with the Israelite world. An extension of this narrative context is to consider the connection between Jesus and wisdom, something Longman does in the final chapter of this second section.

The third section provides some "hands on" demonstration of how to study the proverbial material thematically. Practical guidance is given and then modelled in studies on money matters, male-female relationships, and speech.

Longman's book provides a helpful primer to the introductory reader. The technical details are kept to a minimum but what is provided is useful. Setting the proverbial material in its historical and literary contexts is beneficial, and the thematic studies do provide helpful guidance for working with Proverbs. Longman could profitably have given some examples of how to read the collec-

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tions of proverbs too. The serious student of Scripture and especially of wisdom literature, while finding this work helpful, will need a more substantive treatment to satisfy his appetite for insight into this material.

This more substantive work can readily be found in Bruce K. Waltke's two-volume work: *The Book of Proverbs: Chapter 1-15* and *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*. If Longman provides the primer to Proverbs, Waltke provides the student with a graduate level study of this book of Scripture. The introduction to the book is itself 170 pages in length including a substantial bibliography. Along with the usual introductory issues, Waltke offers a very helpful and quite extensive treatment of the theology of the book of Proverbs (70 pages in length).

Waltke's analysis of the content of Proverbs is certainly scholarly. His command of the Hebrew language is reflected in his translations of the text and his explanation of Hebrew terms. His knowledge of the literature is evident in the copious footnotes provided for the scholarly reader. When appropriate, he interacts critically with the scholarly community in the body of the text as well. The observation in the "Introduction" that the commentary was twenty-five years in the making is certainly evident here.

His most important contribution to the analysis of the text, though, is his sensitive treatment of the poetics of the book. Unlike many of his predecessors, who saw Proverbs as a series of diverse collections of sayings, Waltke works from the presupposition that Proverbs, in its final form, is a carefully crafted whole. He endeavours to uncover how the various parts are put together and what the objective of the author/editor was. This is illustrated, for instance, in his analysis of the opening nine chapters that he calls the

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Prologue to the book. Within this material, he identifies twelve extended addresses by using various rhetorical and thematic devices. Ten of these are “lectures” praising wisdom that are given by a father to his son, while two are extended addresses by “wisdom” personified. This opening serves to set the context of the whole of the remainder of the book.

The explanation of the proverbial sayings is similarly sensitive to compositional technique. The literary context for each proverb serves to illumine its meaning. The nuances of Hebrew terms are well explained and the sense of each proverb is set forth. Theological insights are offered and even devotional application is suggested. Waltke’s treatment is unrivalled in its thoroughness.

My one criticism of the work is that, while Waltke intends the commentary for “pastors, students and Bible lovers” (xxi), the volume of material and, at times, the technical character of it, makes it somewhat daunting for the pastor or student to use. For most purposes, however, this would need to be the only text a pastor or student would need to consult. It should stand as the definitive treatment of Proverbs for a long time to come.

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D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones , *The All-Sufficient God. Sermons on Isaiah 40* (Edinburgh/Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth, 2005), 145 pages, ISBN: 0-85151-908-3.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), arguably the leading Reformed preacher for much of the twentieth century, was first and fore-

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most an evangelist. This recently-published book of sermons on Isaiah 40, what Lloyd-Jones terms one of “the most eloquent and moving chapters of the Bible” (3), well displays his gifts in this regard. Taking the powerful truths of this chapter as his foundation, sermon after sermon drives home the dire state of the human condition and its sole solution in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lloyd-Jones capably deals with such things as the ever-present human tendency to talk in vague terms about the love of God as the basis for salvation without reference to Christ (21-22, 59) and the trust of some in being a citizen of a “Christian” nation as the foundation for their eternal destiny (30). The thought that we can reach up to God through our own efforts is rightly dismissed—though Lloyd-Jones is not prepared to deny the ennoblement of life through all God-given abilities in the fine arts and other human endeavours (99). But fine as all these things are, ultimately they cannot deal with the major problem of our condition, our state as sinners (8-9, 81, 87-88). This, the direst of human problems, can only be dealt with by the cross-work of Christ. Thus, “our supreme need is to know God” through Christ (35).

Lloyd-Jones is conscious of the inadequacy of human speech to speak of God—“I am attempting the impossible when I try to describe the glory of God,” he says at one point in a sermon on Isaiah 40:12-17 (87). But this does not deter him in the use of all of his reasoning powers to lay before his initial hearers—and now his readers—the gospel of God’s saving grace.

There is no introduction to the sermons and thus no context is given for when they were preached. One of the sermons, that on Isaiah 40:6-11, seems truncated. It runs for a little over seven pages, whereas all of the other sermons in the book—there are nine in

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all—occupy more than double this space. These things aside, this is a marvelous collection of sermons that can be used evangelistically as well as for the believer’s edification.

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Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 551 pages, ISBN: 0-87552-000-6.

Robert Letham is the senior pastor of Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church as well as adjunct professor of systematic theology at both Westminster Theological Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary. In this new publication Letham deals with the doctrine of the Trinity under four headings. After first examining the doctrine of the Trinity as it is found in the Scriptures, Letham goes on to spend the bulk of the book in the areas of what he calls historical development, modern discussions and critical issues.

The longest section of the book is part two, which deals with the historical development of the Trinity. Letham starts this section with Trinitarian discussions and debates in the ancient church and then works his way through church history until he gets to John Calvin (1509-1564). While dealing with the most significant men and historical developments of this period, such as Athanasius (c.297-373), Arius and the fourth-century controversy that climaxed with the Council of Constantinople (381), and Augustine (354-430), Letham also refers to lesser-known men and draws out

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their significance. Two examples of the latter are Theophilus of Antioch, the second-century author who was the first to use the term *trias* (triad) for God, and Tertullian (c.160-220), who appears to have coined the term *Trinitas* and who also used *persona* in reference to the threeness of God. Tertullian laid many of the Trinitarian foundations for the Western church and was not superseded until Augustine.

Letham begins part three (modern discussion) by noting the decline of interest Western theology placed upon the doctrine of the Trinity after the Reformation, in particular, after the Enlightenment attention shifted from God to this world. Letham notes that the “revival of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity has its genesis” (272) in the work of Karl Barth (1886-1968). Letham examines Barth’s view of the Trinity by looking at Barth’s earlier and then later work. Letham ends this section by looking at the views of Thomas F. Torrance (1913-), who, in Letham’s view, “is arguably the most significant theologian in the English-speaking world of the past fifty years or more” (356). Letham ties together Barth and Torrance, who studied under Barth, though he does note differences between the two men.

Part four ends on a very practical note and deals with critical issues such as the Trinity and the incarnation, worship, prayer, creation, missions and lastly, persons. Any discussion on God must at some point get to the “so what” for the Church, and Letham’s desire to have the Trinity impact people is very evident.

The book has two areas of weakness. First, it would have been a more balanced study historically had he devoted a chapter to either John Owen (1616-1683) or Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). Letham purposely passed over these men, as he believes they do

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“not contribute anything significant to the advancement of the doctrine” (x). This writer has to respectfully disagree with this decision. John Owen wrote more on the Holy Spirit than any other Puritan and Jonathan Edwards, among the first rank of Christian theologians, though never publishing a treatise on the doctrine of the Trinity, dealt with the subject from his earliest years as a Christian. In light of the many attacks against the Trinity in the eighteenth century and the way Edwards answered many of these attacks (Socinianism), it would have only been prudent for Letham to include Edwards in this discussion.

A second area where the work falls short is in not looking at the errors of Oneness Pentecostals and some contemporary Christian worship songs that are essentially modalist. Letham could have dealt with these issues in either part three or four.

These criticisms aside, the work that has gone into this book is very significant. For the scholar, student, pastor or committed layperson who is serious about a study on the Trinity, Letham is a must read. At the beginning of the book he shares with his readers something Sinclair Ferguson said and it is a good place to end this review: “I’ve often reflected on the rather obvious thought that when his disciples were about to have the world collapse in on them, our Lord spent so much time in the Upper Room speaking to them about the mystery of the Trinity. If anything could underline the necessity of Trinitarianism for practical Christianity, that must surely be it!” (1)

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Tom Nettles, *Baptists & the Doctrines of Grace* (Ormond/Cape Coral, Florida: Reflections of Grace and Founders Ministries, 2004), DVD.

Baptists have a rich heritage of Calvinistic theology. Coming out of the Puritan movement of seventeenth-century England, the early Baptists retained many Puritan theological distinctives, including the doctrines of grace. In today's climate of historical ignorance, this fact is often overlooked. In *Baptists & the Doctrines of Grace*, Dr. Tom Nettles, Professor of Historical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, helpfully reminds Baptists of where they have come from.

Distributed by Founders Ministries in Cape Coral, Florida, this DVD provides an excellent resource for churches who want to learn more about their history, as well as for those who want to learn about the doctrines of grace.

The DVD commences with a hearty endorsement by Dr. Roy Hargrave, the pastor of Riverbend Community Church, Ormond Beach, Florida, where the lectures were held. He commends Dr. Nettles as one of the greatest historians in Southern Baptist history. Hargrave's concern for doctrinal accuracy and theological orthodoxy is exemplified by the content of the DVD.

Nettles provides two lectures on the relationship between a distinctly Baptist ecclesiology and the doctrines of grace. The first lecture, "Baptists and Grace: A Fruitful Foundation," is forty-five minutes long and begins with the relationship between Baptists and orthodox theology. As Nettles forcefully demonstrates, Bap-

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tists are orthodox. He compares Baptist theology with the three criteria that he believes defines orthodoxy: 1) Baptists believe that the Bible is the inerrant revelation of God; 2) Baptists believe that God is Triune; and 3) Baptists believe that Jesus Christ is the God-man, the Incarnate Son of God. He does a good job of quickly explaining each of these three points, corroborating them with statements from various Baptist sources.

After showing that Baptists are orthodox, Nettles goes on to show that Baptists are evangelical. The four criteria of evangelicalism he has determined are: 1) belief in justification by faith alone; 2) belief in the necessity of the Spirit's work in salvation; 3) the completeness of the work of Christ on the cross; and 4) the necessity for sinners to be converted. Following each point, Nettles demonstrates Baptist adherence to evangelical thought with quotations from the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*.

Following this, Nettles changes track and explains Baptist ecclesiology. The word that he believes is a good term to use in describing this Baptist distinctive is "separate." Baptists view themselves as being separate in their relationship to the state and in their relationship to the world. This separation is marked by baptism, the fellowship of the saints and church discipline. Nettles labels this separateness "theologically integrated ecclesiology" because Baptist separateness is based upon the above-outlined views of orthodoxy and evangelicalism. He argues that Baptist theology is the consistent result of being both orthodox and evangelical, though this is not to say that if one is not a Baptist, he or she falls outside of these parameters.

The last major section of the first lecture is focused on the fact that Baptists have historically been both confessional and cate-

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chetical. From their earliest beginnings, Baptists have always owned a confession of faith. The earliest was one drafted by John Spilsbury (1593-1662/1668) and was used by those who formed the first Baptist congregation. A year later Spilsbury and other Baptist leaders signed their names to the *First London Baptist Confession of Faith*. Nettles then goes on to quote from men like James P. Boyce (1827-1888) and B. H. Carroll (1834-1914) who were strongly in favour of using confessions of faith in Baptist church life.

The very end of the first lecture and the beginning of the second deal with the doctrines of grace themselves. Both unconditional election and effectual atonement are covered at the end of lecture one, while total depravity, effectual calling and final perseverance are dealt with at the beginning of lecture two, entitled "Baptists and Grace: Urgency for the Future". For each point Nettles gives a theological definition based on the *Second London Confession*, Scripture verses that support the *Confession* and an explanation of how this doctrine fits with Baptist ecclesiology. This section is very helpful especially for those who have no understanding of the doctrines of grace.

Following the section on the doctrines of grace Nettles explains why Calvinism is consistent with Baptist views on baptism, separation of church and state and liberty of conscience. This is helpful for Baptists who come under fire from others in the Reformed tradition, who argue that it is inconsistent to be Reformed and Baptist.

In the concluding section of the second lecture, Nettles gives a brief history of the Baptists. There were two types of Baptist groups that emerged from the Puritan movement of the seventeenth century: the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists.

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The General Baptists were Arminian and take their name from their view of Christ's atonement. They believed that Christ died "generally" for the whole world. The Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptists on the other hand, take their name from the particularity of the atonement for the elect only.

Nettles explains that the General Baptists tended towards theological decline. In some cases this decline would result in extreme views, including the denial of the deity of Christ. It was their soteriological views that Nettles believes accounts for this decline. Yet Particular Baptist history shows that up until the time of the Down-Grade Controversy of the nineteenth century, they remained faithful to confessional orthodoxy. The history of the divergence of these two Baptist groups should prove a warning to churches to maintain their theological orthodoxy and adherence to Scripture no matter the cost. Otherwise the results could prove detrimental.

History also shows that it was Particular Baptist adherence to the doctrines of grace that spurred the modern missions movement. Men like William Carey (1761-1834) and Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) are examples of the Calvinistic desire to see the gospel spread all over the world.

Nettles finally traces the history of the doctrines of grace in the Southern Baptist Convention. The early Philadelphia Association had a confession of faith based upon the *Second London Confession*. This *Philadelphia Confession* evolved into what became the *Abstract of Principles* that to this day is the confession of faith for the Southern Baptist Convention's flagship school, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The conclusion that Nettles draws at the end of the second lecture is that it is not unbaptistic to believe in the doctrines of grace.

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He laments the efforts of those in contemporary Baptist circles who try to “stamp out” the doctrines of grace.

Although the two lectures are brief and much more could be said, both about the doctrines of grace and Baptist history, this DVD is very good. Baptist churches should make it available to their congregations by placing it in their church library, or actually having a movie night to show it.

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G.T. Eddy, *Dr. Taylor of Norwich: Wesley's Arch-heretic* (Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 2003) xiv+265 pages, ISBN: 0-7162-0568-8.

From an intellectual perspective the “long” eighteenth century was a time of deep ferment for the western world as previous thought-forms were discarded to make way for those constituting what we have come to call “modernity.” The impact of this shift was felt in most areas of human thought. Theology was no exception. The later liberalism of a Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) or an Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) can be traced back to roots laid down in the century previous to theirs. Among those figures who were prominent in attacking traditional perspectives was John Taylor (1694-1761), pastor of the Presbyterian work in Norwich, then one of the leading towns in England. Geoffrey T. Eddy, a Methodist minister based in Warwickshire, England, has produced a long-

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overdue biography of this noted Hebraist and strident critic of classical Calvinism.

Taylor became well-known for his *Hebrew Concordance* (vol. I—1754; vol. II—1757) that placed him in “the forefront of the leading Hebrew scholars of his day” (47). But he also became infamous for being “radical champion of freedom of thought on theological questions” (40). Imbued with the optimistic confidence in human reason that was typical of so many in his day (154-155), he deprecated what he called “Athanasianism” because of what he believed to be its denial of God’s unity (40). Eddy thinks Taylor was probably closest to Arianism in his theological convictions (40, 150, 152).

And though he believed in the infallibility of the Scriptures, Taylor saw no foundation for the doctrine of original sin in Scripture (83). This led him to be the target of attack by two of the most famous Christian authors of that era, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), who critiqued him in his *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (1757), and John Wesley (1703-1791). Eddy details both of their responses. Of Edwards’ response he is very dismissive: “Modern readers are unlikely to think it worth while to plough through the book, based as it is upon a cosmology and a view of Scripture neither of which can any longer be the basis for argument” (96). At a later point, Eddy, with regard to what he believes to be Wesley’s failure to mount an effective response to Taylor, comments that the doctrine of original sin has “simply ceased to be credible” (121). Where then does Taylor stand when it comes to salvation? His teaching is, Eddy says, “frank Pelagianism,” in which “we are saved by our own efforts, with a little help from the Holy Spirit” (119, also 152-153).

Little wonder that many regarded Taylor as an arch-heretic. Ed-

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dy relates the way that one of Taylor's critics, a Calvinistic Baptist minister by the name of John MacGowan (1726-1780)—minister of the historic Devonshire Square Baptist Church in London and a man, in Eddy's words, "over-addicted to irony and vituperation" (236, n.5)—attacked him. In a tract that appeared in the year of Taylor's death, MacGowan depicted Taylor as now sinking down in hell in "despair, while the direful floods of omnipotent vengeance rolled upon him" (cited 6). Eddy terms this book of the London Baptist the "weirdest of all the attacks" upon his hero (5). And yet, a careful reading of the words of the Lord Jesus about the final state of unbelievers would show that MacGowan was not so weird after all.

There is no doubt that much good biography is rooted in sympathy and in Eddy, John Taylor has found both a good biographer and admiring advocate. However, this reviewer would strongly dissent from Eddy's dismissal of such critics of Taylor as Edwards and Wesley. They were no mean students of the Scriptures and sought to subject all their thinking to that body of divine truth. And they would have been very surprised to be told, as Eddy tells us, that when it comes to original sin, for example, they were simply under the thralldom of Augustine (xi)! They were certain—and this reviewer would say, rightly so—that this teaching has an apostolic ring about it.

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Jonathan Hill, *The Church in the Age of Reason: The Enlightenment*

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from Galileo to Kant (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 208 pages, ISBN: 0830823603.

The *IVP Histories* series is an excellent collection of books dealing with various topics relating to the church and history. They are compact, quick to read and visually pleasant. Each volume in the series is relatively small, with full-colour pictures and heavy-gloss pages. There are helpful side-bars throughout, dealing with related topics that provide background knowledge to the general content of the book. As well, brief quotes from key figures of the period are also placed in the margins that help the reader understand salient points in their thought.

Jonathan Hill's volume deals with the Enlightenment and the church's relationship to it. Hill deals well with such issues as the secularization of science and philosophy, the relationship between reason and revelation, and the reaction of the church, both positively and negatively, to this new worldview.

Hill begins by briefly explaining the events that led up to the Enlightenment, including a sketch of the Medieval period, the Renaissance and the Reformation. He also highlights the scientific discoveries of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) that were highly influential in the changing relationship between science and the church. This background information is helpful to readers who may be unfamiliar with the events that shaped the so-called Age of Reason. Undoubtedly the Roman Catholic Church had a significant role in the life of Medieval Europe. With the advent of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the influence of Roman Catholicism and its various scientific, theological and philosophical views were challenged. Neo-Platonism increased, displacing the dominant Aristotelian philosophy of the

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day. Scientific progress became the shaper of worldviews instead of the Church. Though the Reformation was birthed in this time of great transition, it was followed by the birth of its ugly sibling: atheistic humanism.

Hill does a very good job in outlining the lives and thought of various thinkers during this period, both within and without the church. Notably, his section on René Descartes (1596-1650) is particularly informative. The father of modern Rationalism, Descartes' thinking is still an obstacle that the church faces today. Hill also highlights the thought of Sir Isaac Newton in the chapter entitled "The New Science", where he explains, at some length, Newton's contributions not only to science but to the overall worldview of the Enlightenment. These two key thinkers are good representatives of the Empiricism of Britain and the Rationalism of the Continent and understanding their thought helps us to understand the subsequent thinkers of the later Enlightenment.

The final chapter of the book, entitled "Reaction," successfully addresses the synthesis between Empiricism and Rationalism wrought by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whom Hill calls "the epitome and the end of Enlightenment philosophy." Kant is one of the most important philosophers in history, whose thought is still influential in today's philosophical climate.

Although the subtitle implies that the book finishes with Kant, it actually ends with thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) whom Hill looks at primarily in side-bars.

As good as this book is historically, there are a number of criticisms to be made, primarily with regard to Hill's view of John Calvin (1509-1564) and post-Reformation theology. Hill buys into the

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oft-heard notion of “Calvin versus the Calvinists.”¹ Although there are some differences between the post-Reformation period and Calvin that are well-noted by Reformed historians, there are also great similarities. Unfortunately, Hill views the post-Reformed period as a type of scholasticism reminiscent of the Middle Ages (76), where the so-called “Age of Confessionalism” “became dry and technical” (75). It is an incorrect reading of history to say that the heirs of the Reformation believed in the authority of Scripture alone, yet tended to go beyond the Bible in their doctrines of predestination and grace as Hill claims. Theodore Beza (1519-1605) is often accused by many of having done this and Hill is no different. He claims the people of his time regarded Beza “as *the* theological authority” (76, emphasis Hill’s), and blames him for the doctrine of “double predestination.” Hill does injustice to what exactly that doctrine teaches. Reformed theology, arguably since Calvin, has long believed that the predestination of the reprobate to damnation was passively decreed by God, while the predestination of the elect to heaven was decreed actively. Hill makes it appear as though Reformed theology teaches that both acts were actively decreed by God, rendering Him unjust in His condemnation of the ungodly.

Another historical problem arises in Hill’s treatment of the Arminian controversy and the Synod of Dort. Reading even this short section, one comes away thinking that the overriding objective of Dort was to address predestination only. Hill offers a simplistic view of the debate. Though the Canons of Dort did include predestination and election (First Head of Doctrine), it went beyond this to other matters of soteriology and anthropology. For instance, doctrines were affirmed on the atoning work of Christ (Second

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Head of Doctrine), human sin and conversion (Third Head of Doctrine), and the final perseverance of the saints (Fourth Head of Doctrine).

Finally, it is curious that Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was not given any significant attention, especially because Edwards' dates set him squarely in the era of the Enlightenment. What philosophical theologian at that time better handled the philosophy of the Age of Reason, dispossessing it of its truths and dispensing with its errors, than Edwards? He surely deserves more attention in a book such as this.

While this reviewer recommends *Faith in the Age of Reason*, one thought needs to be kept in mind: it functions much better as a book on history and not a work of theology.

NOTES

¹ For an excellent refutation of this view, see Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh/Carlyle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth, 1998).

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David G. Fountain, *Contending for the Faith: E.J. Poole-Connor: A 'prophet' amidst the sweeping changes in English evangelicalism* (London, UK: The Wakeman Trust, 2005), 174 pages, ISBN: 1-870855-32-9.

For students of recent church history, there are two eras that commonly receive attention: the era of Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) and the era of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981). The study

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of both figures and the periods in which they lived are significant undertakings that are sure to be of great spiritual profit. Yet, there is a figure that bridges the gap between these great men of faith who is not as well known. E.J. Poole-Connor (1872-1962) was twenty-one years old when Spurgeon died and lived long enough to see Lloyd-Jones engage the ecumenical crisis of the first half of the twentieth century. Lloyd-Jones, in the foreword to the original printing of *Contending for the Faith* (1966), refers to Poole-Connor as a “friend” and marks him out as an excellent critic of the Evangelicalism of his time. Unfortunately, the name Poole-Connor does not carry the same meaning today as the “Prince of Preachers” or “The Doctor” might. Because he remains in relative obscurity, the reprinting of the late David Fountain’s biography is greatly welcomed.

In the opening chapter, Fountain explained that “Poole-Connor’s life... spanned probably the most disastrous period of church history this country [England] has ever known...” (15). The modernist doctrines that Spurgeon fought against in the Down-Grade Controversy had become common in churches. Higher criticism had subverted confidence in the Scriptures in pulpits, slowly sending many churches into decline without the notice of people in the pew. As Spurgeon did before him and Lloyd-Jones after, Poole-Connor sounded the alarm and wound up a lonely fighter contending against a large number of churches in England. “[Y]et,” as Fountain continues, “throughout that long and dismal time his own testimony shone brightly and clearly” (15).

Poole-Connor’s life should not be marked merely by his involvement in controversy, as his many contributions to British Evangelicalism were quite significant. He was a pastor who held the charge

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of the influential Talbot Tabernacle, Bayswater, London. He was a Nonconformist historian and wrote a number of books on British Evangelicalism. He also contributed articles to many periodicals such as *The Christian* and the *Bible League Quarterly*. He was the General Secretary of the North Africa Mission and was a founder of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. Poole-Connor was a man who engaged both his heart and his mind in Christian service and exerted himself for the cause of Christ. His life is a model of an intellectually informed piety coupled with a faith that is willing to stand through the toughest of situations.

Contending for the Faith is an excellent resource to have in one's library. Fountain not only had a good understanding of Poole-Connor's life, but his knowledge of British Nonconformity was exhaustive. The lucid style of the book makes it easy to read and will be especially helpful for those new to the study of Nonconformity. Fountain also provides a glossary of terms at the beginning of the book and explanatory footnotes throughout that provide further understanding.

The one drawback to the book is the lack of an index that makes searching through it somewhat difficult. Aside from that one small criticism, this reviewer hopes that Fountain's work will not go unnoticed and that others will come to study the life and writings of this very important "prophet" in the recent history of the church.

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Dana L. Robert, *Occupy until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evange-*

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lization of the World (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003), 336 pages, ISBN: 0-8028-07801.

A. T. Pierson was a leading conservative preacher and churchman of the late nineteenth century, usually regarded as a leader in the emerging Fundamentalist movement, in the modern missions movement, and in the Keswick holiness movement. Professor Robert, a missiologist at Boston University School of Theology, provides a lucid and comprehensive biography of Pierson, making the strong claim that “it was A. T. Pierson who crafted the intellectual foundations [of conservative Christianity] for his era” (viii).

Although the book is not intended to provide extensive analysis of Pierson’s theology, Robert effectively summarizes Pierson’s dispensational and Keswick theologies, both of which Pierson adopted during the course of his Congregational and Presbyterian pastoral ministries. She demonstrates persuasively the New School source of much of his ideology, linking Pierson to Finney, Lyman Beecher, and Henry B. Smith, who taught Pierson theology at Union Theological Seminary. She also perceptively documents the transition in American church life from a dominant evangelical culture to a largely secular culture during the course of Pierson’s life. Thus, the book is very good reading in nineteenth-century American church history.

Pierson was prominent at the Niagara and Northfield Bible conferences and maintained close friendships with Fundamentalist stalwarts like A. J. Gordon and C. I. Scofield. He was committed to inerrancy and the other fundamentals of the faith and strongly rejected the higher criticism and other liberal trends of his day. Indeed, he contributed to *The Fundamentals* and was an associate

editor of the Scofield Reference Bible. As such, he is an important figure for modern Fundamentalists.

Robert shows, however, that Pierson had a multifaceted life and ministry. He had a strong interest in social issues, campaigning for workers' rights, women's rights, prohibition, equitable trade policies, and a biblical approach to race relations. Unfortunately, Robert implies that he therefore sympathized with the Social Gospel; however, his commitment to evangelical theology would argue against this conclusion.

Pierson's greatest contribution to his generation related to worldwide missions. He popularized the catchphrase, "The evangelization of the world in this generation," edited *The Missionary Review* for several decades, and spent the last fifteen years of his life as a fulltime promoter of worldwide missions. He viewed interdenominational cooperation as an essential component of his missions emphasis and therefore supported the Evangelical Alliance and other early ecumenical endeavors. Robert links him to the emerging ecumenical movement of the twentieth century in general and with the ecumenical missions conference at Edinburgh of 1910 in particular. When she specifically claims that the younger generation present at Edinburgh were continuing the work begun by missions stalwarts like Pierson, Gordon, Moody, Hudson Taylor, and others (294), she ignores the doctrinal latitude and, in some cases, outright apostasy already beginning to characterize these younger men. This reviewer believes it is unfair to suggest, as Robert does, that the World Council of Churches, a body not noted for its theological conservatism, was the logical and historical outcome of Pierson's vision for interdenominational cooperation. One finds abundant evidence in Robert's own work that Pierson consistently

stood against departures from the fundamentals of the faith.

Robert does establish, however, that Pierson subordinated almost every other concern to his desire to see conservative Christianity preached around the globe. To this end, he decried denominational exclusiveness and an emphasis on denominational distinctives, and he argued that extensive education for clergy was a waste of time and resources given the pressing need for evangelism. He seems to have overlooked the fact that theological training and precision are bulwarks against apostasy. When a biographer like Robert can plausibly assess Pierson's legacy in terms of his positive influence on modern ecumenism (an assessment that I say again is unfair to Pierson's own stated theological commitments), one realizes the danger of focusing on the missionary task of one's own generation and thus undermining the theological foundation that must be bequeathed to the *next* generation.

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Hugh Hewitt, *Blog: Understanding the Information Reformation That's Changing Your World* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Business, 2005), 223 pages, ISBN 0-7852-1187-X.

"What is a blog?" Hugh Hewitt argues that if you don't know, you may be in danger of ignoring something comparable to Gutenberg's press. The implications of the former may be as massive as