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The Great Exchange: Justification by Faith Alone in the Light of Recent Thought

Philip H. Eveson

Bromley, Kent: Day One Publications (1996).

227 pages, paper, £7.99.

(Available in the United States from Reformation & Revival
Ministries, \$15.00, plus shipping)

Authentic evangelicalism always seeks to bring every aspect of its theology to the bar of Holy Scripture. The Protestant Reformation can be explained theologically only in terms of this great principle. Luther's conscience that was captive to the Word of God and that caused him to defy Emperor and Pope was but the forerunner of a spiritual attitude that would distinguish a host of successors. Accumulated tradition, however venerable, must always yield to the Word. In one sense, therefore, it need neither surprise nor disturb us to discover that even so central a doctrine as justification by faith alone is being scrutinized afresh by a wide range of scholars with a view to establishing what the Bible really teaches on the subject. If Protestantism in general has got it wrong then the sooner the matter is rectified the better! Since this particular doctrine can hardly be labelled peripheral it follows that if we are in error here then the indictment against the Protestant case generally must assume devastating proportions. Revisionists within and critics without have been arguing for some years that this doctrine, as hammered out on the anvil of theological controversy four centuries and more ago and persistently maintained since by those who claim to be the heirs of the Reformers, is now in need of radical reappraisal and restatement. Philip Eveson's book is a studied response to this challenge.

The first section tackles the biblical evidence and shows clearly how in both Old and New Testaments justification by faith alone is at the heart of what Eveson calls “God’s saving plan.” Naturally he deals extensively with the Pauline material, showing that the central themes that constitute this doctrine in the apostle’s thinking are fairly and accurately stated in the classic Protestant formulations of justification. The section closes with a linguistic examination of the *dikaioō* and *s-d-q* word groups. He shows that while the demonstrative meaning is undoubtedly present and indeed is the necessary meaning for texts such as Luke 10:29 and Matthew 11:19 (and probably James 2:24) it is the declaratory sense that predominates.

Fundamentally this book is polemical in the best sense of that word. It is concerned to engage in a fair and reasoned critique of those views with which it disagrees. Part Two of the book begins this process by examining afresh the vexed question of the Protestant/Catholic divide over the issue of justification. The author takes us from the Reformation and Tridentine statements of the doctrine to the present day. To the question, “Has Rome changed her position on this issue?” he gives a resounding but informed negative reply. Of course he has to deal with the statements of ARCIC II and, more controversially, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. In both these cases (as also with the Lutheran-Roman Catholic document *Justification by Faith*) Eveson cogently points out how careful one needs to be in the language that is used and the terms which are to be included or omitted if accurate theology is to be done. The little word “alone” is so important in this respect, and Eveson shows that unless such agreed statements include this concept explicitly in their formulations the agreement they affirm is not necessarily all that its proponents claim it to be. In the process by which well-intentioned parties have sought to achieve apparent verbal agreement the truth has actually been surrendered.

Generalized references to biblical terms such as “faith” and “grace” can simply mislead the unsuspecting into assuming that their full biblical content has been grasped and is now being propounded by those who historically have been poles apart in their understanding of them. Implicit in this approach that Eveson so incisively criticizes is the assumption that late twentieth-century theologians, had they been around at the time of the Reformation, could have solved all these problems by a hefty dose of ecumenical dialogue. To say the least, this hardly does justice to the theological ability and mental acumen of both Reformation and Counter Reformation divines. This is not a popular position to take these days, even in some evangelical circles, but Eveson does not hesitate to maintain its absolute necessity if the cause of God and of truth is to be maintained.

Undoubtedly the most controversial and the most valuable section of the book is Part Three in which Eveson tackles head-on the views being advanced by a leading evangelical New Testament scholar, Tom Wright. Leaning heavily on the views of E. P. Sanders, Wright has become the main channel through which those views are gaining entrance into evangelical circles. Sanders argues that first-century Pharisaism has been hard done by in being represented as a religion of works and salvation by merit. This is to read back into the first century the views of fifth-century Rabbinic Judaism. The tragedy, according to Wright and Sanders, has been that this misrepresentation became ossified in Christian theology in terms of the Protestant-Roman divide in the sixteenth century. Protestants, so it is argued, have simply classified the Roman Catholic Church as Pharisaism revivendus. Wright works this thesis out in terms of what he conceives to be Paul’s view of the law and righteousness with pretty devastating consequences for the historic Protestant statement of the doctrine of justification by faith. Obedience to the law, he argues, was not a means of

winning God's favor. Rather it was a demonstration of their response to God's covenant grace. What Paul contributed, coming as he did from the heart of Pharisaism, was to strip away the narrow nationalistic limitation that had come to dominate Judaism and that was expressed in terms of the food laws, circumcision and Sabbath keeping constituting the proof that they were the chosen people. The idolatry of national privilege is the sin of which Israel has become guilty. Justification by faith is a declaration that the way is open for all, not just Jews, to become members of the family of God.

It is one of the great virtues of this book that before proceeding critically to assess such views, it makes a real and, I would judge, successful attempt to understand them accurately and represent them fairly. Eveson deals with Wright's views as they impinge upon the law, righteousness, the curse, justification, imputation and faith. Justification becomes a demonstration of covenant community status rather than a declaration by God that this sinner is no longer condemned but is now accepted on the basis of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him through the instrumentality of faith. Wright's views constitute not so much an amendment by way of fine-tuning the Protestant doctrine but rather a complete revamping of it so that it becomes something quite other. That has needed to be stated because the creeping influence of this position can be seen in a widening circle of evangelical writings. To varying degrees its influence is evident in the works of J.D.G. Dunn, Alister McGrath, Don Garlington and others. To the present reviewer there is more than a little arrogance in the approach, perhaps most clearly indicated in the title of Wright's 1994 Tyndale Lecture, *Justification by Faith: Can We Get It Right Now?* Eveson in this volume has set forth the classic biblical doctrine as rightly represented in the great Protestant confessional statements and has shown how it is

not a misrepresentation of what the Bible actually teaches, but a clear and perceptive summary of it. The importance of the issues at stake and the manner in which the arguments are handled ought to ensure that this book becomes required reading for anyone who seeks to preach the biblical gospel to the modern world. There is no topic that can be said to be more vital to that gospel than justification by faith alone. Whether you read this book in order to ground yourself in that doctrine or to see whether it can stand in the face of the formidable criticisms that continue to be made of it, Philip Eveson's handling of the subject will be of great assistance.

Graham Harrison
Newport, Wales (United Kingdom)

Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology

R. C. Sproul
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1997.
230 pages, cloth, \$16.99.

I would like to propose a new politically correct category for evangelicals: the "theologically challenged." It's high time we gave this burgeoning bunch a name. They outnumber the "theologically aware" by unbelievable proportions. Although it has become acceptable to be T. C., there are a number of the afflicted who would rather not accept their handicap. Braving frowns from the A. T. C. (Advocates for the Theologically Challenged) they are willing to risk a certain amount of scorn to seek out a cure for their condition. If you know such a person and are not afraid of being labeled an intolerant T. C. basher, you might give them an inoculation by R. C. Sproul, titled *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology*.

Dr. Sproul's gift for making complex theology comprehensible is apparent again. The theology is Reformed, and this strategic adjective is explained throughout the volume. Also described is the distinction between theology and religion:

The study of religion is chiefly the study of a certain kind of human behavior. . . . The study of theology, on the other hand, is the study of God. Religion is anthropocentric; theology is theocentric. The difference between religion and theology is ultimately the difference between God and man—hardly a small difference (p. 11).

The book is divided into two parts of about equal length. Part One, "Foundations of Reformed Theology," is an exposition of the solas of the Reformation. God's glory, God's Word, justification by faith, and Christ each take up a chapter. The fifth chapter is a brief and helpful explanation of Covenant theology. Dr. Sproul makes use of Mendenhall's and Kline's work on the six-part structure of the Old Testament covenants. This structure is illustrated from the Scripture, and then the covenants of redemption, works, and grace are explained.

Part Two, "Five Points of Reformed Theology," deals with the famous (infamous?) acrostic. Though Sproul uses different wording for the chapter titles, he does retain the "original language" in the opening of each chapter, a comfort for those who prefer the traditional "TULIP" formula. All of the common objections are answered and there are several quotes from Luther, Calvin, *The Westminster Confession*, and that distinguished theologian, Jack Benny (p. 133). The discussion on "free will" is exceptionally good: "Though Calvin affirmed that we are able to choose what we want, he regarded the term free will a bit grandiose for the matter. 'Why should so small a matter,' he asked, 'have been digni-

fied with so proud a title?'" (p. 131).

Both parts of the volume include tables which serve as points of reference at the opening of each chapter. Sproul also includes a list of books for further reading. While he does write to be understood, Dr. Sproul's love for Latin made the addition of a glossary necessary. The Latin is not too intimidating, since he does take time to define the terms as he writes.

With clarity and compassion for the "theologically challenged" or the "theologically aware," R. C. Sproul has given us a helpful book. Though not everyone will embrace Sproul's covenantal approach, it is still a fine introduction to a neglected subject: theology.

Douglas Shivers
Springfield, Missouri

Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture

Gene Edward Veith, Jr.
Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, (1994).
256 pages, paper, \$14.95.

Gene Edward Veith, Jr., an orthodox Lutheran, is Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and Associate Professor of English at Concordia University-Wisconsin. *Postmodern Times* is the seventeenth and last volume in Crossway's "Turning Point Christian Worldview Series." *Postmodern Times* is a helpful introduction to some rather difficult and complex ideas.

The term "postmodern" can be a bit slippery and elusive. Veith distinguishes between "postmodern," which he sees as our contemporary period of time, and "postmodernism," which he sees as a secular ideology which is replacing mod-

ernism (xiii, 42). Veith hopes that the postmodern era will be a bright opportunity for Christian faith, while he is wary of postmodernism as an ideology. Veith generally agrees with those who hold that with “the end of modernism, the postmodern era can mean a rebirth of classical Christianity” (xii). Veith’s plea to Christians is to understand the times. Indeed, “If Christians are to minister effectively in the postmodern world and avoid its temptations, they must understand the spirit of the age” (20).

Veith describes his book as “a walking tour of contemporary thought and culture,” and states the book’s purpose: “to describe trends that Christians need to be aware of, commenting on them from the perspective of biblical Christianity” (23). The book is divided into four main parts: “Postmodern Thought,” “Postmodern Art,” “Postmodern Society,” and “Postmodern Religion.”

Part One, “Postmodern Thought,” begins with a very brief sketch of Western thought, moving quickly from premodern, to modern, and finally postmodern thought. Veith agrees with many contemporary thinkers who proclaim that modernism has come to an end (chap. 1). Modernism has failed, but he sees another secularist ideology following in modernism’s place, and Veith asserts that the postmodern era will contain its own set of challenges, problems, and difficulties.

Veith also gives a helpful introduction to deconstruction, and offers a brief but insightful Christian response, suggesting that Christians must understand the nature of language, meaning and truth in explicitly theological/biblical terms (chap 2). The postmodernists are right to emphasize the centrality of language and words. They err when they fail to understand how the meaning and legitimacy of language and words must be understood in light of the larger Christian theistic vision, which places the Word (preexistent, transcendent, incarnate, written, preached, etc.) at the

center (chap. 3). Veith surveys the postmodern view of the self, and concludes that postmodernism commits the twin errors of denying individual identity and universal human values (chap. 4).

In Part Two, “Postmodern Art,” Veith argues (following Francis Schaeffer) that the abstract ideas of philosophy eventually work their way down to the world of art (chap. 5). Hence postmodern art reflects the ideas and beliefs of postmodern thinking. Postmodern art denies the centrality of the artist (remember, for postmodernists there is no “self”). It works out of presuppositions which deny absolute truths, as well as denying any overarching “metanarrative” which makes sense of the world.

Modern architecture is now giving way to postmodern architecture (chap. 6). Postmodern architecture refreshingly does not put such a high priority on function, as modern architecture did, but Veith sees dangers in postmodern architecture, which is driven by postmodern ideology (with its emphasis on disunity, incoherence, discordant styles and images, and general irreverence). Veith suggests that modernism, with its pride and arrogance, is like the Tower of Babel, while postmodernism, with its disunity and pluralism, represents the curse of Babel (119).

In a brief treatment of T.V., movies and literature (chap. 7), Veith illustrates how postmodern thinking has influenced these mediums. T.V., with its unconnected images and surface appearances is perhaps the postmodern medium. Postmodern “metafiction” features fiction about fiction, where, for example, the author may tell the story of a writer, who in turn addresses the reader directly (127-28). While such playfulness can be refreshing, Veith warns that a constant reduction of literature to its conventions (i.e., fiction about fiction) can be dehumanizing.

In Part Three, “Postmodern Society,” Veith surveys how postmodernism fleshes out in social and political institu-

tions and groups. Postmodern thinking leads to a “new tribalism” (a militant, but ultimately shallow, emphasis upon the differences and distinctives of different social groups) (chap. 8). Since postmodernism rejects the self, one’s “identity” is found in one’s social group. If modernism put a radical emphasis on the unity of the race, postmodernism puts a radical emphasis on the disunity of the race, hence the postmodern emphases on multiculturalism—a rather surface “appreciation” of various cultures.

In politics postmodernism looks askance at democracy and evidences troubling similarities with fascism (chap. 9) (see Veith’s other work, *Modern Fascism: Liquidating the Judeo-Christian Worldview*). Veith’s main point is that with the postmodern rejection of absolute truth and values, politics ultimately cannot be rooted in any “higher” or “absolute” standard. Hence postmodern politics leads ultimately to political tyranny.

Postmodernism manifests itself in all aspects of everyday life, whether it be in contemporary business, a “new class” mentality, science (e.g., chaos theory), education, social policy, and environmental issues (chap. 10). Postmodernism has thankfully done away with many of the errors of modernism (e.g., a reductive, naturalistic rationalism need not reign in science), but postmodernism is in its own way hostile to orthodox Christianity, since it does not recognize the reality of the objective, created order, or the existence of Christian truth, or the ultimate finality of Christ.

In Part Four, “Postmodern Religion,” Veith outlines what a Christian spirituality might look like in a postmodern age. Postmodern spirituality faces the difficult task of being a “spirituality without truth” (chap. 11). Much of postmodern spirituality will be guided by desire, taste, and pragmatics, since truth has been rejected. New Age religions are perfect kin to postmodern thought, since New Age religions generally affirm the maxims that you are god and you create your

own realities.

Veith calls for a “postmodern Christianity” (chap. 12). He warns that postmodern thinking has indeed invaded the church, leading to, among other things, an overemphasis on experience over doctrine. What is needed is a vital “confessional Christianity,” what Veith calls a “live orthodoxy” (220). Veith welcomes Thomas Oden’s call for a return to classical Christianity, but he believes that Oden may underestimate the influence and all-pervasive nature of postmodern thinking.

Veith concludes his volume by noting that while postmodernists proclaim the end of all “foundations,” Christians must continue to turn to the foundations of Christ and His Word (Matt. 7:24, 26; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:20). Christians must walk the tough road of perhaps changing the style of evangelism and outreach without changing the content—a difficult path indeed. While “anti-foundationalism” is trendy, Christians must continue to affirm the twin foundations of morality and truth.

Veith has provided the Christian community with a helpful introduction to postmodernism. Longer and denser works are appearing (e.g., D.A. Carson’s *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*), but Veith’s volume is a helpful introduction. Veith is an able guide and walks the reader through many complicated issues, and is able to take difficult issues and make them understandable to the reader. Similarly, one of the book’s strengths is Veith’s ability to show how ideas work themselves out in life and practice, and Veith does an excellent job of showing the consequences of postmodernist ideas. Some critics might (with some justification) argue that Veith brushes in too broad strokes. Perhaps, but he acknowledges from the outset that he is offering simply a “walking tour,” and not a dissertation on the subject (xiii).

Veith’s call for a return to confessional and doctrinal

Christianity is inspiring and on target. While many contemporary writers call for a return to “community,” Veith is forthright in proclaiming that any Christian “community” worthy of the name must be doctrinal and confessional, and must not surrender her affirmation of and belief in truth.

One main negative critique is that at times Veith’s “walking tour” through postmodern thought needed a more directed “path.” Veith moves from example to example, from story to story, and this reader found himself wishing for periodic summaries of main points, in order to hold these complex ideas together (one such summary is found on pp. 158-59, about two-thirds through the volume).

Whether or not your friends, associates, or fellow-church members can articulate a definition of postmodernism, most (all?) are affected by postmodernism, and some are more directly engaging such ideas. Pastors, teachers, deacons, and others who seek to understand their times will benefit from this work. For a five-minute crash course in postmodernism turn to pages 158-59, where Veith summarizes postmodern thought with eight key statements. These eight theses, particularly when coupled with a possible Christian response to postmodernism, can serve as a good outline for a teaching time with your church, Bible study, campus ministry group, etc. After reviewing these eight summary statements, work through this timely volume—pencil in hand, your children and friends in mind, and the future of Christ’s church in your heart.

Brad Green
Waco, Texas

Redemption Accomplished and Applied

John Murray

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1955).

236 pages, paper, \$10.00.

In the 1970s when I was in college it could be dangerous to your popular standing to be labeled a “Calvinist.” But the growing interest in Reformed theology, and the broadening respect in American evangelicalism for such reformational thinkers as Michael Horton, R. C. Sproul, and John Armstrong among others, has brought about a welcomed change. It has become not only permissible but almost fashionable to examine and ponder the system of soteriology known as the doctrines of grace, which are often summarized as the five points of Calvinistic theology. As wonderful as this is, the fact remains that the questions and challenges which accompany such a study are as perplexing today as they ever were. And students of this “tough-minded” theology would do well to discover the masterful writings of past expositors and theologians who grappled successfully with these issues and have left the light of truth to guide us through the darkness. When it comes to issues regarding the death of Christ and its effect and extent, perhaps no one sheds more helpful light than Dr. John Murray in his classic little paperback titled *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*.

John Murray, for many years Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster (Philadelphia), is one of those men whose brilliance is displayed in brevity. The succinct and simple style of this book is surely one of its strengths. Throughout its pages there are many one- or two-sentence summaries that catch the reader up on the argument, and serve to tie down firmly in the mind the points being made. When I first read this book several years ago I underlined

many of these significant sentences. And I have gone back to them often to find just the right way to understand and communicate difficult theological concepts to my students and congregation. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* is not only a good informational read, it is a very usable and important reference for any who would reflect deeply on the plan of redemption.

As the title implies, the book falls into two parts. In Part One, Murray begins with an effective argument for the consequent absolute necessity of the atonement based on God's decree to save, and on the depravity of sinful man. He next turns to the important question of the nature of the atonement. In this chapter he gives a brilliant treatment of the passive and active obedience of Christ, and demonstrates that a correct understanding and appreciation of these concepts is essential to a biblical view of atonement. Along the way he gives helpful definitions and explanations for propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption. Chapter three finds Murray arguing biblically for the perfection of the atonement over against the Roman Catholic doctrine of continual satisfaction through good works. In a day when some are naively seeking unity with Rome, this chapter is must reading. Murray shows that the absolute perfection of the atonement is clearly understood in its finality and uniqueness.

In the last chapter of Part One, Murray arrives at the critical question: For whom did Christ die? Most who pick up this book in search of answers to the "limited atonement" puzzle will be tempted to rush directly to this chapter for easy answers. But this would be unwise! Murray's tremendous work in this chapter flows out of his study of topics previously discussed, especially the doctrines of propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption. All of these words define aspects of the death of Christ which Murray shows from Scripture to have been accomplished, not simply made

possible. For instance, Murray states: "What does redemption mean? It does not mean redeemability, that we are placed in a redeemable position. It means that Christ purchased and procured redemption" (p. 63). Those who really desire to understand the questions of the atonement biblically must resist the temptation to skip over the foundational chapters of this book.

Murray seeks to reeducate the reader regarding the question: For whom did Christ die? He shows that this is not the first question to ask. The first question is, What did Christ accomplish on the cross? If this question is a legitimate one (and Murray shows from text after text that it is) then the answer to this first question will determine the answer to the second. If what Christ accomplished on the cross was the possibility of salvation, then it could be argued that He accomplished this for all men without exception. However, if as Murray abundantly proves through biblical exposition, Christ actually accomplished salvation, that is, saved a company of sinners, then it must be that the salvific effects of His death were accomplished only for those who had been elected unto eternal life. This view is defined by Murray as "definite atonement."

In this chapter Murray interacts with all of the most potent objections to the doctrine of definite atonement. Perhaps his best work is done in answering the objection that such a view of the death of Christ renders the free offer of the gospel to all an impossibility, since salvation was not accomplished for all in the first place. Here Murray ably distinguishes himself from those hyper Calvinists who argue against the obligation to offer salvation through the gospel freely to all. Murray says:

It is frequently objected that this doctrine is inconsistent with the full and free offer of Christ in the gospel. This is grave misunderstanding and misrepresentation. The truth

really is that it is only on the basis of such a doctrine that we can have a free and full offer of Christ to lost men. What is offered to men in the gospel? It is not the possibility of salvation, nor simply the opportunity of salvation. What is offered is salvation. To be more specific, it is Christ Himself in all the glory of the person and in all the perfection of His finished work who is offered. And He is offered as one who made expiation for His sin and wrought redemption. But He could not be offered in this capacity or character if He had not secured salvation and accomplished redemption. He could not be offered as Savior and as the one who embodies in Himself salvation full and free if He had simply made the salvation of all men possible or merely had made provision for the salvation of all. It is the very doctrine that Christ procured and secured redemption that invests the free offer of the gospel with richness and power (p. 65).

Murray goes on to give a concise answer to many other objections to definite atonement including the texts that use “universal” terms (e.g., all, whole world, etc.) to describe aspects of the death and redemptive plan of God. I have turned to this section many times in my pastoral career and found it simple, insightful, and easy to use with others. He also interacts with every significant passage that is thought to oppose the view of definite atonement and does so with clarity and integrity. As readers might expect, this chapter shines as the jewel of the book.

In Part Two, Murray surveys the doctrines associated with the application of the redemption purchased at the cross to the believer through the Holy Spirit. This section, containing ten chapters, provides a powerful and easily accessible introduction to biblical soteriology. Beginning with an overview of the order in which the redemptive experience unfolds, Murray takes the reader on a theological journey through the topics of effectual calling, regeneration,

faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, union with Christ, and glorification. Taken together they provide a sound and biblically supported introduction to the way that God saves sinners.

Two chapters are worthy of specific mention in our day. The first deals with regeneration. Much confusion has arisen from the fundamental error of assuming that regeneration follows faith; i.e., that the sinner believes, and is consequently rewarded with new life. Murray ably demonstrates from the biblical text that, in reality, regeneration precedes faith, that new life is imparted sovereignly to the elect, and the immediate consequences are faith and repentance. In my judgment, the unwillingness of so many today to accept the biblical order of regeneration and faith accounts for the widespread compromise of the gospel. If new life is so dependent upon the decision of a sinner’s will, then pragmatism makes sense; let’s do whatever it takes to get a decision! But if man is dead—both unwilling and unable to come savingly to Christ or even prepare himself to come—then we dare not mess with the purity of the gospel, for it is the “power of God unto salvation.”

Second, the chapter on union with Christ is a much-needed reminder today of a crucial doctrinal area that is largely unknown in our churches. Murray’s careful and exegetical study of this mysterious union of Christ and the believer is not only profound and informative, but it also leaves the reader’s heart warmed to worship. If our churches knew the truths of union with Christ, and were pushed to reflect deeply on this mystery, our living and our worship would be reformed in a mighty and visible way.

Classic literature has been defined as those books that are highly praised and seldom read. John Murray’s little book, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, certainly qualifies as a classic in that it deserves high praise. But, if in being presented as a classic, it scares away the very ones

who should read it, I gladly commend it to you as something less. Here is a book that has helped thousands through the years, and it will help many in our day as well. It is time we rediscovered this beautiful little book and made it a classic for a new generation of disciples.

David Hegg
Corona, California

***The Progress of Redemption: The Story of
Salvation From Creation To The New Jerusalem***

Willem VanGemeran
Grand Rapids: Baker (1988).
544 pages, paper, \$19.99.

Willem VanGemeran, Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, does a commendable job of delivering to the church a very readable work on the meaning of God's revelation from a progressive paradigm. As evidenced in the title, the author has chosen the theme of redemption as the thread that weaves its way through the fabric of Scripture. While there are other themes such as kingdom and covenant (see Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, for a discussion of "theme" and the various scholars), VanGemeran writes from the perspective that from the very beginning of Scripture, God is seen as unfolding His plan of redemption until the restoration of all things. Further, this restoration takes place only in Christ. "The center of the Bible is the incarnate and glorified Christ, by whom all things will be renewed. All the acts of God, all the revelation of His promises and covenant, all the progression of His kingdom, and all the benefits of salvation are *in Christ*" (p. 27, italics his).

In his introduction, VanGemeran lays out the manner in which his study will proceed. The discussion of exegesis, the art of the Bible, hermeneutics, and his particular approach—the historical-redemptive—are all very helpful. Of particular note is the author's desire to see that what is written in his work produces not only a factual knowledge of the unifying theme of Scripture, but a faith development that leads one to live in light of the truths discovered. Herein lies the pastoral side of this work. Pastors will find this work scholarly, warm, inviting, and challenging to their pulpit ministry. ". . . [T]he sermon is not just an exposition of the experience of God in the past; the event must be recreated so that the minister helps his people to experience God in the present as God's people did in the past. Such a sermon is proclamation."

Educators as well will enjoy this work from a design perspective. VanGemeran gives an introduction and conclusion to each section. Each introduction has seven issues/concerns to be addressed. The conclusions to each section likewise have seven areas of summarization from the preceding chapters and what implications they carried.

VanGemeran's desire is to unearth the biblical writers' literary artistry as the main way to demonstrate the historical-redemptive hermeneutic. Anyone interested in the literary aspects of the Bible will delight in this volume. But as VanGemeran himself says, this is not art for art's sake, but for theological reasons—for developing a community of faith. Faith development in the community of God's people was not only God's point in allowing the various men with their diverse artistic impressions to paint with great color the beautiful landscape of Scripture, but it is VanGemeran's desire as he unfolds this volume on Scripture.

The first ten parts (of twelve) of this volume deal specifically with the biblical texts as progressively given in the canon of Scripture. However, the last two parts are worth

the price of the book. Having read through the first ten parts and having been extremely edified in my faith and stretched in my hermeneutical paradigm, the last two parts were joyously helpful in working out the faith of the Scriptures in the life of the church. Few writers evidence such humble yet forthright exhortations to the community of God's people in a book. It is further support that VanGemeren is interested in the reformation of God's people, the church, and not just promoting a certain approach to the interpretation of Scripture. In the last two parts, the author discusses a hermeneutic, not only of Scripture, but of culture.

This book is highly recommended to scholars, pastors, educators, and the rest of us ordinary Christians awaiting to be refreshed as we increase in our knowledge of God and His outworking of redemption from the first day until now and to the end.

Gary Vet
St. Charles, Illinois

The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology

Richard Lints

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans (1993).

359 pages, paper, \$20.00.

Richard Lints teaches theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Lints' work is just what its title says: a prolegomenon. He is offering a word to evangelicals, both a positive and a negative word as to how evangelical theology can move ahead in largely postmodern times. Lints posits that evangelicals have too often ignored important methodological questions, and evangelical theology will be crippled until such questions are

faced squarely (pp. 8-12). Fundamental questions of theological method must be engaged:

What is theology after all? What is a theological vision? How do theology and culture relate? How does the construction of dogma relate to the biblical text? Where does one's religious tradition fit in? What principles of organization (e.g., historical, philosophical, cultural) ought to be used in theology? How might one go about finding principles to determine which principles ought to be employed (the metamethodological question)? (p. 8).

Of these methodological questions, the central question for Lints concerns one's "theological matrix" or "theological framework" (p. 19). By this He means something like one's "conceptual framework," frame of reference, or one's "way to think about the world" (p. 17). The theological matrix is the same as one's theological framework. Lints writes:

My driving concern in this volume is to elucidate the process by which the theistic matrix is derived and to illuminate the significance of that matrix for the remaining matrices [vocational, leisure, etc.] of a person's noetic structure. . . . [I]t is to ask how one should construct a theological framework and how a theological vision ought to arise from that framework (p.19).

While one may have many "matrices," Lints is concerned with one's "theological matrix." Lints wishes to emphasize the fabric of theology, the overarching framework of the theological task. He laments that "evangelical theology tends to deal with each component part individually, at best stitching things together after the fashion of a patchwork quilt" (p. 261). Indeed, "there is no pattern that holds the quilt together overall, other than its diversity. Evangelical theolo-

gy tends to be as haphazard in assembling individual doctrines as television is in assembling individual images: there is no encompassing framework or intrinsic consistency" (p. 261).

Lints affirms two principles: (1) the "realism principle" ("Individuals normally know the world pretty much as it really is"), and (2) the "bias principle" ("Individuals never know the world apart from biases that influence their view of what really is the case") (p. 20). Unless one recognizes both of these principles one's theology will be skewed. It is necessary to affirm that one can know things (the realism principle), but that at the same time one's knowledge is influenced by one's background and culture (the bias principle) (if this is all the more destructive postmodernists were after, there would be little to argue about, but this is not the case). Lints is particularly concerned to relate these principles to the interaction of theology and culture. In short, evangelicals must recognize that theology shapes culture and culture shapes theology. They each impact the other. If only the realism principle is recognized one will be blind to the harmful effects of one's own biases (ironically, one's own biases will come to prevail as if they were "the truth"). If only the bias principle is affirmed, all quickly becomes relative, and there is no ultimate truth accessible to human knowledge (pp. 20-28).

Lints' work is divided into three parts: (1) "Theology: Texts and Contexts," (2) "Theology: Past and Present," and (3) "Theology: Frameworks and Visions." Part One, "Theology: Texts and Contexts," contains: prolegomena (chap. 1); a brief survey of evangelicalism (chap. 2); an introduction to Lints' own suggested theological matrix—the Bible presents the history of redemption, and this history of redemption should be the overarching framework for the theological task (chap. 3); an exposition discussing how the Scriptures—"the divine witness to and interpretation of God's redemptive activity in

history"—is appropriated by the believer through the three "filters" of tradition, culture, and reason (chap. 4).

Part Two, "Theology: Past and Present," contains a brief summary and recommendation of the theological "frameworks" of the past—the Magisterial Reformation (Luther and Calvin), the Reformed Scholastics, Jonathan Edwards, and Geerhardus Vos (chap. 5); an introduction to postmodern theology, and the relation between evangelical theology and postmodern theology (chap. 6).

In Part Three, "Theology: Frameworks and Visions," Lints offers some preliminary suggestions "for constructing a theological framework and appropriating a theological vision" (p. 259). This part contains: a detailed discussion of the theological nature of the Bible (it is the redemptive nature of the Bible, both in the sense of what the Bible accomplishes and what it witnesses to that is important) (chap. 7); a discussion of how to move from the biblical text to a theological framework, a move that focuses on three horizons—(1) the textual horizon ("the immediate context of the book [or passage]), (2) the epochal horizon ("the context of the period of revelation in which the book [or passage] falls"), and (3) the canonical horizon ("the context of the entirety of revelation") (chap. 8); a discussion of how a theological framework (which is constant) might be turned into a theological vision (which changes with the culture), a task that requires theology to enter into a rigorous discussion with the church, popular culture, and the academy (chap. 9).

Lints writes from within evangelical convictions, and his book is good reading for several reasons. First, it is necessary for church leaders to think theologically and biblically, and this book walks through some of the "first things" in helping Christian leaders to do just that. Lints calls for grounding both the content and the form of one's theology in both the content and form of the Bible. Thus, it is no surprise that he continues to appeal to the old Princetonian,

Geerhardus Vos, as a helpful model in the ongoing task of theological work. (Indeed, Geerhardus Vos' biblical theology appears to be always close in the background of this volume.) Lints' own positive articulation of a "theological framework" is largely modeled along Vosian lines: redemptive history, redemptive revelation, and redemptive theology are the keys to a sound evangelical theology.

Second, Lints is familiar with many contemporary trends in theology and philosophy, and can help introduce the busy Christian leader to such issues. Particularly helpful are the more than sixty pages of chapter six, where Lints deals with postmodern theology. He does an admirable job of both being fair to the postmoderns, but yet offering a strong warning that ultimately evangelical theology and the vast majority of postmodern theology are simply two different (and contradictory) projects.

Third, and perhaps of particular interest to readers of this journal, Lints is articulating a theological vision which manages to: (1) allow the Bible to be the determining force in the theological task, and (2) mine the riches of the best of Reformed and Lutheran theology as examples of theological movements which have engaged in the very project which Lints is recommending, and which can provide role models for contemporary Christians.

I know of at least one evangelical seminary professor who uses this volume as a text in his "Introduction to Theology" class. As a graduate student, I found it to be a particularly helpful introduction to the often bewildering world of contemporary theology. It is refreshing to see Lints move from Scripture to Calvin and Luther, to Warfield and Vos, and then to contemporary theological issues. Lints' work is no light read, and it is a dense work. But it deserves close attention, and a thorough read will be well worth the effort.

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Counterfeit Revival: Looking for God in All the Wrong Places

Hank Hanegraaff
Word Publishing (1997).
315 pages, cloth, \$19.99.

Hank Hanegraaff's *Counterfeit Revival* is a well-documented, well-written book that is so absorbing one can barely put it down. The foreword is written by a former Vineyard pastor who recounts being "delivered" from the modern so-called revival of endtime pseudo-prophets and their groupies who bark at sermons, laugh uncontrollably at the doctrine of eternal hell, and are more likely to be "slain in the Spirit"—or even stuck to the floor by "Holy Ghost Hit Men"—than order their lives by anything but their experience and their notebook full of latter-day prognostications. From there the author goes on to recount the history and the vagaries of the Counterfeit Revivalists—a group of people who in their more lucid moments actually claim the seizures, excesses, and sins that ultimately discredited the First Great Awakening were the essence of that great revival.

Hanegraaff convincingly exposes these historical fabrications by expounding not only the works of Jonathan Edwards but also Peter Cartwright, for whom these excesses were simply the works of Satan to be remedied by prayer (p. 120). For those of us asleep like Rip Van Winkle for the last twenty years, this present day "revival" is characterized not by biblical preaching but by the parlor tricks of hypnotists and "spiritual con men" who—as Hanegraaff shows—use whatever strategy is necessary to divorce their audience from the control of their emotions. The result: multitudes enter into supposed "experiences of the Spirit," forsaking all pretense of worshipping God in truth or testing

the spirits. Audience members are even warned *not* to pray before meeting the “man of God” lest they not be able to “receive the Spirit”—contra Acts 4:24 and Peter Cartwright, but just what the false prophets order (p. 223)! Hanegraaff’s critique extends to the Fabrications, Lying Signs, Endtime Restorationism, “Slain-in-the-Spirit” Phenomenon, and Hypnotism (“FLESH”) behind the Counterfeit Revival. Once you’ve seen his documentation you’ll agree the acronym “flesh” is no mere rhetorical device.

Though Hanegraaff’s strength in critiquing the Counterfeit Revival is his use of Edwards, he omits the use of this powerful weapon in discussing Endtime Restorationism. Just as the Counterfeit Revival’s error is found in replacing faith in Jehovah with faith in a god whom men can manipulate, and compounds it by replacing the joyful experience of being cleansed from sin with having a laughing fit, it continues to err by preaching “end-time blessings” without connecting those blessings to the grace-inspired obedience of God’s people to God’s covenant. Edwards would not have fought the Counterfeit Revivalist’s claims about future blessedness where God’s people “become the head and not the tail” or become “lenders and not borrowers” with Hanegraaff’s uncertain eschatology. Instead Edwards—as any biblical postmillennialist—would have linked the Bible’s promises of future blessedness in history to a revival which produces genuine reformation with blessedness as its *consequence*, not blessedness apart from holiness. In the teaching of the Counterfeit Revivalists, there can *only* be the search for blessedness apart from holiness because there is outright mocking for those who live according to God’s Word, the very thing that makes us “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)! Thankfully, this Counterfeit Revival will die in the presence of the exposition of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount while biblical revival flourishes under such preaching. Furthermore,

Edwards would have boldly affirmed future blessedness in history but denied it to those who, like the Counterfeit Revivalists, use such prophecies to exalt themselves as “super-apostles” instead of using biblical promises to humble man before a Holy God whose Scripture must be obeyed at all costs. Nevertheless, don’t let this oversight by Hanegraaff keep the potential reader from getting the book. Simply keep this omission in mind.

Readers from America’s Southern States will also note that the Counterfeit Revivalists persist in representing their scripture less by the color “Blue” as worn by Union troops in America’s bloody Civil War. Likewise, they persist in representing the despised biblicists by the color “Gray,” the supposed color of the Confederacy. In reality, of course, the Northern “Blues” were much more likely to be dominated by Unitarianism and God-hating rationalists and revolutionaries than the “Grays.” In fact, the Grays experienced various revivals of true Christian piety among their ranks during the war. So much for the insights of the “prophets!” Counterfeit Revivalists betray their sympathies with God-haters and revolutionaries.

Along this line of bloody confrontation, is this movement not the work of Satan himself when its “prophets” talk about a coming Civil War which will “cleanse” Christendom of the biblicists who are sickened by the excesses of the Counterfeit Revival? Surely they must know that doglike howling, fits of laughter and supposedly being slain by the Spirit are more reminiscent of the Gadarene demoniac’s Legion of demons than the God-honoring response of the prophet Isaiah who truly experienced the holiness of God. We have been given fair warning though: the agents of the Counterfeit Revival, unless vanquished by the declaration of the Bible in the power of the Spirit, will one day seek to inflict bloodshed upon those who dare to love God with all their mind and confess with the Savior who—quoting the

Scriptures—taught us “man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

Let me add that this reviewer certainly received his own share of correction about the scope of the danger this movement presents. In the past I had deep reservations about certain evangelical brethren. I scorned their critiques of “rock music” because they were not satisfied to critique the lyrics alone. Hanegraaff’s portrayal of the power of peer pressure and emotionalism *in addition to the renunciation or minimizing of biblical truth* makes a powerful case against rock music due to its own attempt to liberate emotion from the control of the mind and truth. This was not an application Hanegraaff had time to draw; rather it was one inferred from his work.

In light of Hanegraaff’s book one must ask, “Is every self-described ‘charismatic’ part of the Counterfeit Revival?” Thankfully not. You can tell the ones who aren’t, Hanegraaff reveals, by the fact they’re criticized by John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement, for being “too heavily oriented to the written Word” (p. 109). Sadly, most “charismatics” are not. But then, neither are most modern day “evangelicals.” We like our subjectivism, too, as Jay Adams is fond of reminding us. We simply talk about “fleeces,” “open doors” and “checks in the spirit,” and have ministers who, despite sins which disqualify them for the eldership (1 Tim. 3), tell their people “a vote against me is a vote against God”—and the “evangelical church members” believe it. Just because we practice our subjectivism while remaining respectably upright in the pew, our neglect of the Word is no less reprehensible.

Hanegraaff, Christian radio’s “Bible Answer Man,” has tackled a touchy subject and even performed the near miraculous feat of finding a Christian publisher daring enough to go to press with it. Those successes alone mark

him as a faithful and resourceful man. One only wonders, how much more damaging material and critique were left on the editor’s desk for fear of reprisals? It seems at times some of the documentation of the excesses of this false movement go begging for analysis, yet little is offered. Squeamish editors, or cutting text to reach a predetermined number of pages? We may never know.

If you’ve always suspected in your heart something was terribly wrong with the theology and worship of your charismatic friends (your fellow church members?), but could “never put your finger on the problem,” this book shows the full-blown fruit of the modern charismatic movement. The movement in its most popular forms is not in reality a new dependence on spiritual gifts at all, but the quoting of biblical texts as a pretext for the despotism of supposed spiritual leaders and the renunciation of the Christian mind for thrill-seeking followers who want good feelings without justification by faith, and want prosperity without the Puritan work ethic, another name for biblical sanctification by grace and the mortification of sin.

What evangelical and Reformed Christian can read this book without being stirred to the very core of his being? Don’t let the book make you go out and spraypaint “Cult” on the nearest synagogue of the Counterfeit Revival though; let it motivate you to challenge everyone you meet in the Counterfeit Revival to truly love Christ with all his *mind*. That will be the best use of this excellent work in your life and ministry.

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