

BOOK REVIEW

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Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment

Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Scott, editors

Carlisle

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xix + 344 pp., paperback

Here is another very valuable book from Paternoster with a wealth of information and analysis on the development of Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy from the time of the Reformation to its decline in the eighteenth century. The book is a collection of 18 essays by a wide variety of writers divided up into five main sections: Luther and Calvin; Early Reformed Orthodoxy; The British Connection; From High Orthodoxy to Enlightenment; and The Rise of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

As is to be expected in a book of this sort, the essays vary considerably in readability, interest, and value, but the book nevertheless deserves a place in the library of every serious student of Reformed theology. We found particularly interesting and valuable the essay by Richard Muller on Beza's *Tabula praedestinationis*, a translation of which is soon to be published by Paternoster, and the essay by Lyle D. Bierma on Olevianus' covenant theology.

The book is particularly valuable, however, because of the information it provides on many lesser known figures of the Reformation. There are essays on the theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli, Jerome Zanchius, Caspar Olevianus, Andreas Hyperius, William Perkins, Gisbertus Voetius, Francis and Jean Alphonse Turretin, and in the Luther branch of the Reformation, Philip Melancthon and Johann Gerhard.

The main thrust of all the essays, however, is, as the title of the book indicates, a re-evaluation of the charge, often brought against Reformed theology in general, and more recently against all Reformed orthodoxy after Calvin, that it is scholastic. So often has this charge been brought, and so widely is it believed, that it conjures up in the minds of most the spectre of arid, speculative, philosophical, unbiblical debate about trivial questions (cf. p. 17) and keeps many from reading or considering the theological position of Post-Reformation Reformed theologians.

The book attempts to show and does show successfully, we believe, that scholasticism is not in itself a bad thing. It also demonstrates, however, that while the Reformers (including Calvin) and their successors used scholastic language and methods of teaching and defending the truth, they were *not* scholastic in their theology, but in fact rejected scholastic theology almost completely.

It was only, according to the authors of this book, when Reformed scholasticism was abandoned that Reformed orthodoxy began to decline and opened itself to the influences of the Enlightenment, rationalism, deism, Socinianism, and even atheism. Thus the chapter on Jean Alphonse Turretin, the son of Francis Turretin by birth but not by belief.

The main thesis of the book is, then, that while Reformation and Post-Reformation theology can to some extent be characterised as scholastic in its methods and language, that this is not a bad thing and is part of the *positive* development of Reformed orthodoxy to its high water mark in the theology of such men as William Perkins and Francis Turretin. With this thesis we heartily agree and recommend the book to all who wish to see corrected the very biased view of church history that sets Calvin and later Reformed theologians against one another - that views later Reformed orthodoxy as an aberration rather than a positive development in the church's understanding of the truth.

We hope, too, that the expectation of the editors is indeed being realised, "that these two insights, one stressing the necessity of understanding Protestant orthodoxy in its own historical-intellectual context, the other ridding the word scholasticism of its pejorative connotations, have effected a change in the scholarship surrounding this area the long-term impact of which should be nothing short of revolutionary" (p. xv).