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Review: Foundations of Evangelical Theology

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surprisingly, relatively moderate or even conservative positions. One example of this is H. Schwarz's discussion of eschatology. While rejecting any Hal-Lindsey-style "cinematographic eschatology," he cautions against the other extreme "of becoming oblivious to the signs of the times" (2. 582).

Multiple authorship of the work is perhaps the most striking feature. This approach, as one would expect, results in several internal disagreements. For example, in the Christology section C. Braaten chastises evangelicals for the "exclusiveness" evidenced in the Lausanne Covenant's rejection of universalism (1. 559, 563). However, G. O. Forde, in speaking of the work of Christ, criticizes universalism as an abstraction that "does little real good and has no basis in Scripture" (2. 92). His position is joined by Schwarz, who speaks of hell and "a dimensional separation from God and the faithful" (2. 586).

In spite of such differences there is a surprising degree of theological unity displayed in the work. This unity goes beyond the basic Lutheranism of the contributors. All six seem to share the eschatological orientation of much of contemporary theology. More specifically, it appears that each one has been influenced greatly by the so-called "theology of hope," especially as articulated by J. Moltmann and W. Pannenberg. Other contemporary alternatives, such as liberation theology and process theology, are critically evaluated from this basic perspective. Multiple authorship does result in one major difficulty, however. The differing writing styles of the six contributors make for uneven reading. Certain sections lack the flow of those produced by the more gifted writers.

As would be expected in a work of this nature, there is a host of theological criticisms that each reader will find. Although intense theological interaction with the work lies beyond the scope of this review, several positions that the reviewer found problematic should be noted. In an odd way Jenson suggests without clarification that God has a body (1. 175). Sponheim's handling of the problem of evil is weak (especially 1. 440–441). Braaten seems to reject historical inquiry as the basis of faith (1. 477). Hefner unfortunately declares that the priesthood of believers "does not assert . . . that every believer is a priest" (2. 227). Forde understands separation of Church and state as a "political expedient necessitated by bad theology" and a step of self-preservation by the world (2. 459), whereas historically this doctrine has been articulated by the free churches to insure religious and not civil liberty.

Despite whatever shortcomings are present in the work, *Christian Dogmatics* is a significant contribution to theology. It will in all likelihood become the standard text in many American seminaries and promises to be the useful reference tool for clergy envisioned by its editors. As a work representing mainline Lutheranism (and to some extent mainline American Christianity) it is "must reading" for evangelical theologians, who no doubt will find it highly stimulating. Forde's section entitled "The Christian Life," which contains a significant explication of justification by faith, may prove to be the most seminal for evangelical readers. The six contributors—Braaten, Forde, Hefner, Jenson, Schwarz and Sponheim—are to be congratulated for offering their work to the entire Church.

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Foundations of Evangelical Theology. By John Jefferson Davis. Baker, 1984, 282 pp., $9.95.

With this volume Davis has attempted to fill a contemporary theological vacuum. Writing "a general introduction to the study of systematic theology" has hardly been a frequent activity in recent times. Hopefully this bold attempt is an indicator of a revival

of interest in systematics among those who hold to an evangelical understanding of Biblical authority.

Davis begins with a brief historical essay that discusses "the evangelical theological tradition" in its developing context since the Reformation. The title of chap. 1, "Between Fundamentalism and Modernity," leaves little doubt as to where the author places evangelicalism on the theological spectrum, though not all will agree with the details of his analysis.

Following this background sketch Davis charts his course through chapter-length treatments of "Nature and Method in Evangelical Theology," "Divine Revelation," "Reason: A Kingdom-Extending Tool," "The Role of Religious Experience in Theology," "Scripture: Word of the Great King," "Tradition as Theological Authority," and "The Interpretation of Scripture." At the end of each chapter there is a specialized bibliography dealing with its subject matter.

This work has many strengths. Besides serving as a partial remedy to the dearth of recent prolegomena to systematic theology, it also admirably seeks to "give prominence to the missionary context of theological reflection in the church" (p. 9). Davis has applied with some consistency the fruit of recent missiological discussions on contextualization in the realm of systematics. While such a task is fraught with the dangers of "cultural interpretation" (see J. R. McQuilkin, *JETS* 23/2 [June 1980] 113–124), it is necessary if the unique theological questions of each generation and culture are to be addressed.

Davis achieves his objectives to a significant degree. Though brief and quite selective, the various chapters are helpful, compact introductions to each area. Also, Davis has been true to his aim to probe the contemporary currents that affect the evangelistic witness and ecclesiological understanding of American evangelicals today. The size of the volume, its moderate price, attractive layout, and chapter-by-chapter bibliographies will serve to make it a usable and valuable introductory work.

On the other hand, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* is not without its weaknesses, some of which are of consequence. For example, the very title itself presents a problem to a careful evangelical thinker. It would more appropriately be called "Foundations of an Evangelical Theology." Davis' views and treatments hardly are agreed upon across the evangelical spectrum today.

Davis should be commended for his attempt to give his readers something of an evangelical *Megatrends* at the end of chap. 1 (pp. 34–39). But it is questionable how much of his "Agenda for the Future" is based on dispassionate observations of the theological arena and how much is Davis' personal attempt to set the evangelical theological agenda for the rest of the century. For example, his brief discussion of postmillennialism (p. 39) sounds much more like an advertisement than an objective assessment of the position.

An even more troubling case is found in the final chapter, "The Interpretation of Scripture." In his brief treatment of dispensationalism Davis only serves to further many of the historical and hermeneutical misconceptions about the viewpoint. Although there are still those who hold the conceptions Davis subtly critiques, his out-of-date bibliography explains the deficient summary of the movement today. A rapid reading of R. Saucy's recent "Contemporary Dispensational Thought" (*TSF Bulletin* [March–April 1984] 10–11) reveals a significantly different state of affairs. There is thus irony in Davis' less critical (or sympathetic?) handling of the theonomy position. Here his references reflect a close reading of the pulse of that controversial movement within the Reformed orbit.

It is hoped that the concerns I have expressed may keep the reader from an uncritical acceptance of all that is presented in *Foundations of Evangelical Theology*. To a great degree, American evangelicals are in the debt of Davis. However, that debt can best be paid by the publication of a number of other works in the area of theological introduction

by evangelicals.

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Strange Gifts: A Guide to Charismatic Renewal. Edited by David Martin and Peter Mullen. Blackwell, 1984, 239 pp., $24.95/$9.95.

The Christian Church, like the Jewish nation, has been guilty of outlawing some of her best people and movements. On the other hand she has at times correctly shunned novelties, aberrations that would have led her away from her true goal. The dilemma, however, remains, for it is extremely difficult to make sound judgment contemporaneously with those people and movements. Church leadership is captured by an acculturization and a theological worldview that creates a tragic blind spot far more than we like to acknowledge.

This book addresses the modern challenge to institutionalized orthodoxy. The research and insights of eighteen contributors is marshaled to provide the reader with an appreciation of the issues involved. A number of the writers are clearly opposed to the charismatic renewal movement, while others are wholeheartedly commendatory. The former are in the majority, or perhaps more vocal.

Not surprisingly, glossolalia is frequently discussed. No consensus is reached about its nature or purpose. A. Walker considers Acts 2 an example of speaking in "recognized foreign languages," while Congregational minister C. Williams regards that passage to be glossolalia, not xenoglossy. D. Davies affirms that "tongues" are not languages, but Roman Catholic writer B. Davies poses the problem of genuine interpretation if there is no language to interpret. R. Noakes charges (intemperately?) into the fray with the declaration that speaking in tongues is "an abnormal manifestation which does nothing to build up the church as it is merely a stream of meaningless syllables, sometimes mixed with a few words." But that seems too harsh.

A number of contributors outlined the ecclesiastical and theological distinctives of the movement. These include a "wildfire" ecumenism, extempore prayer, free liturgical compositions, emphasis on teaching and Biblical knowledge, adventism, triumphalism and fundamentalism. Walker, in an article on the house-church movement, the more sectarian wing of the renewal phenomenon, noted the similarities with ideas propagated by the Plymouth Brethren of the nineteenth century, a comparison more relevant to British readers than to those in North America.

The reader may be surprised that J. Richard appeals to the promise found in the conclusion of Mark's gospel to justify the Church's healing ministry. The dominical words are more safely located in Luke 10:9 than in the disputed Markan passage. N. Challingsworth will not convince many that the primary meaning of charisma is "an extraordinary power (as of healing) given a Christian by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church," a definition found in Webster's *Dictionary* and reflecting contemporary rather than a thorough Biblical description. M. Israel's reference to Mark 10:15, the need for childlike faith to enter the kingdom of God, is hardly directly applicable to the "childlike" attitude asked of those who want charismatic renewal. But then which writers are not guilty of prooftexting? The Biblical tradition is too complex not to encourage this methodology.

One of the disconcerting features was the rapid change of tempo as the reader moves from article to article. Like reading a dictionary, the subject constantly changes. One structure I did discover was that the less laudatory articles are followed by others that are "on side"—a balancing of the ledger, so to speak. I found myself neither convinced by the supporters nor drawn to the opposite pole. But perhaps in that the editors have