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BOOK REVIEWS

POCKET DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGICAL TERMS

Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1999)
122 pages, paper, \$6.99

The study of theology requires one to enter into a historic conversation, a two-thousand-year-old conversation at that. The conversation includes many great thinkers and many important terms. But how do moderns make sense of this conversation? How can both beginner and seasoned theologian communicate clearly with one another? The authors of this little book provide a concise, but highly useful, introduction to the historic theological conversation without becoming prolix.

From philosophical terms, like *a posteriori* or *a priori*, to theologians such as Ulrich Zwingli, the authors cover a wide-ranging field of English terms, foreign terms (including but not limited to both Latin and Greek), theological movements and traditions, and theologians and schools of theological thought. Both the novice and the specialist will find here a wealth of straightforward, clear and concise definitions. (And each entry includes a helpful system of asterisks which direct the reader to parallel entries.)

Terms both modern and ancient are sagaciously used. For example, the contemporary term "deconstruction" is defined as "a term used primarily in hermeneutics . . . to describe the process of analyzing a particular representation of reality so as to offer a critique of how a text 'con-

structs' a picture of reality." Since dozens of contemporary terms are essential for modern theological conversation it is helpful that the authors include a number of the important terms often tossed about today. The frequently used, and rarely defined, "postmodernism" is defined as

A term used to designate a variety of intellectual and cultural developments in late-twentieth century Western society. The postmodern ethos is characterized by a rejection of modernist values and a mistrust of the supposedly universal rational principles developed in the Enlightenment era. Postmoderns generally embrace pluralism and place value in the diversity of worldviews and religions that characterizes contemporary society.

Theological systems are another essential part of sound theological conversation. Conservative contemporaries often misuse terms like "neo-orthodoxy" and "natural theology" when commenting on twentieth-century discussions. Confusion abounds regarding proper use of such important terms (e.g., dispensationalist theologian Charles Ryrie's little book on neo-orthodoxy published several decades ago by Moody Press and required reading for many years in strongly conservative circles). The *Pocket Dictionary* accurately says of "neo-orthodoxy:"

An early twentieth-century Protestant movement (involving, among others, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr) borne out of a sense that Protestant liberalism had illegitimately accommodated the gospel to modern science and culture, and in the process had lost the classical focus on the transcendence of God as well as the Word of God. In this situation neo-orthodox thinkers promoted a return to the basic principles of a Reformation theology and the early church (especially the primacy of Scripture, human

depravity and God's work in Christ) as the basis for proclaiming the gospel in the contemporary context, while taking seriously the Enlightenment critique of orthodoxy and rejecting Protestant scholasticism. Neo-orthodox theologians often used a dialectical approach, which sought theological insight through the juxtaposing of seemingly opposing formulations held together as paradoxically true (e.g., humans are fallen and depraved, yet free and accountable before God).

Another important debate in our century has been about the place and role of natural theology. The *Pocket Dictionary* is again extremely helpful, and very much to the point, when it says of natural theology that it "maintains that humans can attain particular knowledge about God through human reason by observing the created order as one locus of divine revelation."

To gain some idea of the breadth of terms defined consider that there are helpful entries here for the following (ask yourself how many you could *simply* define?): adoptionism, allegorical method, analogy of being, analogy of faith, antinomianism, biblical criticism, *communicatio idiomatum*, contingency, decree, descent into hell, dichotomist, Ebionism, emanation, exemplarism, *filioque*, the Five Ways, free will theism, hamartology, Adolf von Harnack, *Heilsgeschichte*, hermeneutic of suspicion, iconoclasm, immanent Trinity, intuitionism, literalism, Marcionism, modalism, monism, narrative theology, Occam's razor, pantheism and panentheism, patripassianism, pietism, presuppositionalism, prevenient grace, reader response theory of hermeneutics, reconstructionism (dominion theology), revivalism, scholasticism, structuralism, syncretism, theology of hope, ubiquity, univocal, *vestigium trinitatis*, voluntarism, and worship.

For well over a decade I have highly recommended Millard J. Erickson's useful little book, *Concise Dictionary of*

Christian Theology. I will still recommend Erickson, but now I will add to my recommendations, for students and laity alike, this extremely useful new volume that is well worth its very inexpensive price. Get it. You will consult it again and again if my guess is right.

EDITOR

UNHOLY MADNESS: THE CHURCH'S SURRENDER TO PSYCHIATRY

Seth Farber

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1999)

162 pages, paper, \$12.99

Nothing challenges the life and pastoral leadership of the Christian church at the end of this century quite like the role and place of the psychotherapeutic method. Friends and foes alike seem almost unable to carry on a profitable, much less civil, discussion without turning to unhealthy personal assaults. Into this discussion enters author Seth Farber, now a public speaker who has appeared on William F. Buckley's engaging *Firing Line* program. For sixteen years Farber was a practicing psychotherapist. He received his doctorate in psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in 1984. In 1988, while apparently questioning the framework of his own social training, he went on to establish the Network Against Coercive Psychiatry. This alone demonstrates something of the burden of this well-written little book.

To say that this is provocative stuff is an understatement. Farber concludes, near the end of his biting critique:

I have no doubt that if Jesus were to return and be examined by a panel of psychiatrists or psychologists, they would determine unanimously that he suffered from a severe men-

tal illness. Within their own limited frame of reference there is no other way of making sense of Jesus' metaphysical understanding and claims about himself and the world. Thus the choice before us is clear: we judge Christ by the standards of the mental health system, or the mental health system by the standards of Christ (138).

Farber's conclusions regarding psychology were not reached, as he writes, "in an ivory tower" (13). He was a practicing therapist, an advocate and a friend of the "mentally ill." He studied both friends and foes of the industry. For this reason he tells his own story in chapter one. In chapter two he reveals how mental health professionals have "colonized domains of human life that used to be under the authority of the family, school or community" (13). Using the well-known arguments of two dissident psychiatrists, Thomas Szasz and R. D. Laing (in chapter three), he astutely uses the criticisms of two "professionals" showing that psychiatry undermines democratization, and ultimately the ministry of Jesus Christ Himself.

In chapter four Farber's Anabaptist views of church and culture frame his argument. Here is Farber's unique contribution, in terms of how he particularly attacks the psychological way. It is also the book's weakness, in my view. Given this framework Farber argues that the Constantinian phase of the church's development "denatured" Christianity. Farber argues that there are three prevalent misinterpretations today that are the result of the Constantinian influence upon the church's history. These are: (1) a prevalent interpretation that Christianity is an "otherworldly, or purely spiritual, religion"; (2) Christianity is to be understood as an apolitical religion; and (3) Christianity is often understood in fatalistic terms (82).

Farber is correct in seeing the eschatological transformation of the earth itself as a "traditional Christian

vision." Citing Rodney Clapp's excellent work in *Families at the Crossroads* (InterVarsity Press, 1993), he approves Clapp's insight that in evangelical circles the vision of the kingdom of God has been "privatized and spiritualized." G. C. Berkouwer, the Dutch Reformed evangelical theologian, is cited to demonstrate that "when the expectation of a new earth is denied, the very meaning of life on this earth here and now breaks down" (83).

In making his second point regarding modern Christian misinterpretations Farber cites the common notion that Christianity is apolitical. He writes, "There is no biblical warrant for the prevalent Christian view that Christianity deals with a private, inward realm that is independent of the individual's political and social life" (87). It has not been the Reformed worldview, however, that has fostered this dichotomy quite so seriously as has the consistent rise of pietistic movements. Anabaptism has not been immune to these movements, at least in America, anymore than have the descendants of the magisterial Reformers.

The third point is the one that presents the most serious problems for those who are careful and evenhanded in dealing with Reformed theology. Arguing that the denial of "free will," with regard specifically to salvation, leads to fatalism presents serious weaknesses, both exegetically and historically. Farber shows very little understanding of the way Reformed exegetes have dealt with the matter of human responsibility. He also reveals very little understanding of how powerful an ally Calvinism has been to democratic ideals and human creativity. Before evangelicals go for Farber's overall thesis here they would do well to realize how much he departs from our better confessions by citing theologians of the Orthodox tradition as his model for soteriological reflection.

At the end of this section, on the challenge of psychiatry to the contemporary church, Farber reasons that "the church

has surrendered to psychiatry . . . because it has largely accepted the otherworldly or spiritual interpretation of Christianity." He adds that this results in "Christians [who] do not believe they can act as catalysts for the realization of the kingdom of God on earth and the sense of our own responsibility for the realization of this vision . . ." (91). In contemporary Anabaptist fashion, following writers like the late John Howard Yoder, Farber's answer is found in the church seeking to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth.

The remainder of the book is taken up with demonstrating that the concept of "mental health" is neither "scientific" or "value-neutral." To do this Farber again reverts to seriously flawed Anabaptist exegesis. He attacks the anthropology of Augustine and calls for a more humanistic view of man that affirms the biblical vision. He concludes, "It is time for a renaissance of Christianity—of Christian humanism" (14). Farber then argues for the church being a countercultural community based upon values *entirely* antithetical to the world. Here he attacks Christians in the mental health professions for "capitulating to the mental health system" (15). As before, a worldview is at work here. It is the view H. Richard Niebuhr called "Christ against the culture." It is also the traditional Anabaptist view and thus the reader should be forewarned.

In the final chapters Farber cites neo-Anabaptist theologians such as Thomas Finger (once again the influence of Eastern Orthodoxy is still present) who encourage believers not to strive for making the world's structures better but to offer a "new alternative." Farber, quite correctly, demonstrates "that the 'mentally ill' are by and large victims of processes of professional stigmatization and social exclusion" (15). He intriguingly argues that "schizophrenic episodes" are often experiences that provide an opportunity to "be reborn in the Spirit as a disciple of Christ" (15).

Before evangelicals jump on Farber's bandwagon they should get a much better idea of the Anabaptist view of culture and community. The assumptions of this approach are inherent in everything Farber argues in this book. Because of these assumptions, and because Farber fails to properly understand both Augustine and the magisterial Reformers, both his conclusions and his prescriptions present serious problems. This treatment is an improvement over the attacks some fundamentalists level against counseling in general, and psychotherapy in particular, but it is still fundamentally flawed.

EDITOR

THE LIFE OF THOMAS MORE

Peter Ackroyd

New York: Nan A. Talese (1998)

447 pages, cloth, \$30.00

Everyone knows Thomas More. He is the suave, urbane lawyer played by Paul Schofield in the film adaptation of Robert Bolt's play, *A Man for All Seasons*. In the film, More suffers for his conscience and his faith under Henry VIII, played by a winsome, youngish Robert Shaw. And he does so with marvelous wit and aplomb, and, finally, deeply moving dignity. A great deal has to be said for Bolt's play and for Schofield's performance. Both have captured unmistakable aspects of Henry's Lord Chancellor. But, only aspects. To capture More himself, one of the more notoriously fugitive personalities of the early modern era (or any era, for that matter!) is quite like capturing a rainbow or a thunderstorm with the bare hands.

It is this realization that makes Peter Ackroyd's *Thomas More* so compelling. Ackroyd is profoundly aware of the fact that his subject is one of the most elusive and complex

personalities of a whole age of complex and elusive personalities. This and the fact that Ackroyd is perhaps the finest biographer writing in English today. His *Dickens* (1990) and *Blake* (1996) have established his reputation. And now comes *The Life of Thomas More*, which merely confirms the obvious: this is a writer and researcher of monumental stature.

It helps greatly that his subjects are all Londoners, because Ackroyd *knows* London—ancient London, medieval London, Victorian London and modern London. And what makes this so important in the life of Thomas More is that before and after anything else, More was a Londoner. So Ackroyd's careful and descriptive placement of events and scenes in the muddy, stinking streets, in the great halls and hovels, in the palaces and courtrooms that were sixteenth-century London carries the reader's imagination to another place, another time. Ackroyd is a tale-spinner of magical qualities when it comes to this kind of thing. (It helps that he is also a historical novelist with nine works of fiction to his credit.) So from beginning to end we are carried off to London from 1478 to 1535 with its religious festivals, its cock and bear-pits, its whores and cutthroats, its crudely humorous common people and educated, but no less crude, gentry, its religion and revolt—in a word, all that is fair and foul about the largest city in the world at that time.

But if More was a Londoner, he was much more a lawyer. Coming from a family of lawyers (his father, John, was a leading jurist in his day), More was trained in the best tradition of English law. Equipped with the extraordinary intelligence such training produced, arguably, he had one of the best legal minds in Europe. With this legal mind, More's entire life was one of promotion and advancement culminating in his appointment by Henry as Lord Chancellor in October 1529. More loved the law and saw it as an essential safeguard against the natural tendency

of society to disintegrate. This is essential to any understanding of More. Troubled his whole adult life by deep insecurities and conflicts, More saw the law as one of two psychological safe havens.

The other was the Roman Catholic Church. More's devotion to the Roman church was, if anything, greater than his devotion to the law, or anything else. He regarded her as the true church, the true repository of the gospel, the true and only realm of salvation. This is why he could only contemplate with horror any challenge to her sanctity or authority, whether this came from Protestant incendiaries or from the Crown itself.

But More was more than a devotee to an institution. He was a devout and conscientious Catholic Christian, concerned, as all men of his age were, with the salvation of his soul. More's many internal conflicts arose from just this source. Declining to take holy orders as a young man, More nevertheless continued in monkish practices throughout his life, including flagellation, fasting and prayer, and the wearing of a hair shirt next to his skin under his otherwise elegant garments. Fierce in his hatred of heretics, he engaged in written polemics and delighted in their burning (and damnation). More's breach with Henry and his eventual death over the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn were more than convictions about institutions. They were the sincere and ultimate acts of a man determined to save himself from hellfire.

All of this is described and analyzed by Ackroyd with finesse and vigor. But he goes beyond this to show us as much of the human More as may be possible for us to know. What emerges is a warm, humorous, loving, witty man capable of cold hatred, tearing sarcasm, and cruel cunning—not so unlike the rest of us except for the degree of his intelligence and opportunities. More loved children, especially his own, educating them to the best of his con-

siderable abilities. This included his daughters, an unheard of thing in the Europe of his day. His eldest daughter, Margaret Roper, was considered by many, including Erasmus, as "the cleverest woman in England." As a friend to such as Erasmus, More was capable of deep devotion and what would be considered in our time as an unmanly tenderness. His love for family, learning, new knowledge, the common people, and the affairs of state make him one of the most human of the men of his time.

But, like the other men of his time he was capable of incredible blindness and prejudice, superstition and cruelty. Only Luther could match him in all these areas. Indeed, we may say that Luther was the mirror image of More, possessing all of More's conflicts and obsessions, but in reverse. The picture of Luther that emerges in Ackroyd's narrative is entertaining, critical, and, at points convincing. One could wish however, that he had depended less on the psychoanalytical work of Erik Erikson in this portrayal; such dependence makes certain of his conclusions dubious and raises questions about his competence in other specialist areas.

Was More a Christian? This is a question that has been asked me by several friends with whom I have discussed this book. Ackroyd presents us a complicated and conflicted man. This is as true, if not more so, in his faith as in the other areas of his complex life. In his last days the old polemicist had no stomach for theological combat but spent his time writing meditations on the passion of Christ. When books and writing materials were taken from him, he devoted himself to meditation, prayer, and the encouragement of his fellow prisoners. He bravely met his death in the faith a devout medieval Catholic. Was More a Christian? Was Bernard? Was Erasmus? Was Luther? God knows. God will judge.

THOMAS N. SMITH

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**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST: A BIBLICAL ECCLESIOLOGY
FOR TODAY**

Everett Ferguson

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1996)

443 pages, paper, \$35.00

This comprehensive volume, which parallels in several ways Ferguson's earlier study, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Eerdmans, 1993), is a doctrinal study, rather than historical. The central thesis that Ferguson develops is an affirmation of the thoughts contained in the Introduction to this issue of *Reformation & Revival Journal*, namely that Christ is *not* complete without His people! Ferguson accomplishes this by providing a detailed study of New Testament ecclesiology showing the reader how Christ must be consistently correlated with the church's nature, membership, assemblies, ministries and life together.

So many attempts to deal with the doctrine of the church are in reality systematic theologies which appear to have very little to do with the text of Holy Scripture itself. Ferguson's work is a marvelous exception to this general rule. Though he provides here a doctrinal overview of the church, he does this always with the intent of allowing the text to specifically inform his doctrinal conclusions.

Appropriately, Ferguson begins his survey by using four biblical categories to give perspective: covenant, kingdom, Messiah and community. In the preface he writes:

Ecclesiology may be regarded as the organizing theme for twentieth-century theology. The ecumenical movement gave new stimulus in the mid-twentieth century to the doctrine of the church. A large number of studies of the church or some aspect of it have resulted. I will not often enter directly into dialogue with these studies, but will develop a positive expo-

sition of the material from the New Testament (xiv).

Ferguson correctly observes that, "God gave a *person*, then a *proclamation*, and then a *people*. This is the historical and theological order" (xvii). It is the proclaimed word of Christ that gathers the people, a people who have responded to the proclamation of the gospel. He roots his approach properly in the doctrine of *sola scriptura* by grounding everything he argues for in the normativeness of the apostolic word as contained in the scriptures which were accepted by the historic church. Later historical developments are treated as *important*, but never as *normative*.

Ferguson's study is limited to the New Testament alone, a choice that may disturb some, but he always keeps a keen sense of the Old Testament in the background; i.e., radical discontinuity is *not* defended here. His aim is simple—to present a biblical theology of the church which is carefully and exegetically drawn from the pages of the New Testament. I believe that he accomplishes this goal.

Everett Ferguson is professor emeritus in the College of Biblical Studies of Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas, where he has been on the faculty since 1962. Writing from the tradition of the Churches of Christ, Ferguson's work will be especially appropriate for those who accept the believer's church idea. In spite of the sometimes strident nature of the arguments employed by the tradition of the Churches of Christ, Ferguson is both irenic and incisive. This work will benefit any serious student of the doctrine of the church and will make a contribution to the study and pursuit of Christian unity.

EDITOR

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE REFORMATION

Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1996)

107 pages, paper, \$12.00

The editors, both Lutherans who are associated with the creation and work of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, in Northfield, Minnesota, have once again provided a collection of helpful essays.

As the title of this particular volume suggests, "catholicity" was always the intent of the magisterial Reformers. These men never set out to create a new church, or a new kind of Christianity, to be known as the Protestant Church. Their purpose was to reform and renew the life of the visible church in continuity with the "one holy catholic and apostolic church." That this resulted in schism and visible separation was a matter of great loss to these biblical reformers. Only because they believed the truth of the gospel was at stake did they risk the separation that eventuated.

Geoffrey W. Bromiley, quoted extensively in my Introduction to this issue of *Reformation & Revival Journal*, writes of these essays, on the cover of the book:

These essays try to rescue the term *catholic* from exclusive association with Roman Catholicism. Written from a Lutheran orientation, they plead for an evangelical catholicity. The authors cover such main themes as liturgy and ministry, and a survey of some of the texts used by Barth reveals a close affinity between Lutheran Pietism and catholic piety.

Contributors include David S. Yeago, a Lutheran seminary professor who proposes a new way of reading Luther, suggesting that the shift in Luther's thought actually brought him *closer* to the church's catholic tradition. Frank

C. Senn, a Lutheran parish minister, discusses the issue of the mass and how the Reformers went about instituting changes which restored the participation of the people along with the regular preaching of the Holy Scriptures. James R. Crumley, a bishop emeritus, examines various understandings of the role of pastor in view of the catholic tradition. Robert L. Wilken, a highly regarded professor at the University of Virginia, surveys pietism, demonstrating that this recurring movement has generally sought to recover some of the lost aspects of medieval piety which have value for the church at large. This essay is especially valuable for those within the Reformed tradition who so quickly decry all pietism as useless. Günther Gassmann, the former director of the commission on faith and order of the World Council of Churches, discusses ways in which the church universal can become a communion of churches. More conservative readers will profit from this essay even though they will surely disagree with some of Grassman's specifics.

The editors, Braaten and Jenson, both contribute essays as well. Braaten explores the problems which arise from the lack of a clearly defined teaching authority in Protestant churches. This is a useful piece of clear thought. Braaten reminds us that "Heresies never circulate with a surgeon general's warning that swallowing them might impair one's spiritual health" (60). After demonstrating that the first two instruments developed by the church to exclude heresy and establish orthodoxy were the canon of Scripture and dogma, Braaten writes that:

Today we need to stress the church-relatedness of Scripture on two fronts: against Protestant biblicist fundamentalism, on the one side, and against modern rationalist historicism, which uses the historical-critical method to deconstruct the Scriptures as the "book of the church," on the other. Both

fundamentalism and historicism pretend that they approach the Scriptures without presuppositions. These seemingly incompatible heresies are simply two sides of the same coin; in disregarding the church as the *Sitz im Leben* of scriptural interpretation, they proceed to look through the glasses of their own self-concealed subjectivity. In pretending to be neutral and objective, both are engaging in gross self-deception, and they deceive millions of others to boot (61).

Surely there is enough in a quote such as this to offend someone. But, to my mind at least, it is an important observation worth careful pondering by serious Christians concerned for the health of the visible church.

Robert W. Jenson, a professor of religion at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, examines *communio* ecclesiology, describing ecumenical thought on this approach to the church. He develops his thesis in several areas which will not please some evangelicals. He writes, correctly I conclude, that "As the fellowship of the church is foundationally fellowship with Christ, so the fellowship of the church on earth with the church in heaven is foundationally fellowship with Christ" (11-12). The way in which Jenson connects this to the Roman Catholic idea of fellowship with venerated saints in heaven leaves one puzzled, but the point is still a valid one in its *central* thesis.

Evangelicals, especially evangelicals who know precious little of the views held by the Reformers on the doctrine of the church, desperately need this book. My fear is that they will never read it, since it is not a popularly packaged work and demands careful thought. And if they do read such a book, I fear they might be put off by segments here and there that they properly reject. Since when did you have to agree with every argument made in a book to profit by it?