
Pro Rege

Volume 7 | Number 1

Article 6

September 1978

Half Century of Theology: Movements and Motives (Book Review)

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Recommended Citation

Vander Stelt, John C. (1978) "Half Century of Theology: Movements and Motives (Book Review)," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 7: No. 1, 26 - 27.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol7/iss1/6

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the biblical data . . ." (p. 11).

Newman and Eckelmann evaluate various methods for estimating the age of the earth and conclude that this planet is very old. They discuss theories of the formation of the solar system and the planet earth and present their preference. They suggest that the model they accept is not in conflict with the witness of Scriptures.

The main part of the book is short, about 80 pages, and is followed by three papers. The first, an article by Daniel E. Wonderly, first appeared in the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* in 1975. It reviews various methods used to estimate the age of the earth. The second appendix is a reprint of an 1890 paper by William Henry Green which discusses why the genealogies in the Scriptures cannot be used to fix the date of Noah's flood or the creation of the world. The third appendix is an article by John R. Snow which argues that the creation days of Genesis are long indefinite periods. Thus the book and its appendices argue for an "old earth," progressive creationism, and long creation days.

The significance of the book, I feel, is that it is representative of a small but growing class of literature that avoids both theistic evolution and speculative theories to support the creationist viewpoint. (Another such book is the one by Davis A. Young, reviewed in *Pro Rege*, December, 1977.) The book avoids theories that have no basis in Scriptures or in scientific observation, and for this reason it is a helpful addition to the literature on origins.

A Half Century of Theology. Movements and Motives, by G.C. Berkouwer (translated and edited by Lewis B. Smedes), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977. 268 pages, \$6.95 paperbound. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Associate Professor in Theology and Philosophy.

Upon his retirement on October 12, 1973, as professor of dogmatics in the Faculty of Theology at the Free University, Berkouwer reflected on his theological activities of some fifty years within the world of Reformed churches and theology. These theological reflections he published in *Een Halve Eeuw Theologie: Stromingen en Motieven van 1920 tot Heden* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1974), the book Smedes has translated and edited for the English-speaking world.

As throughout his life, Berkouwer proves himself also in this book to be an expert in the

theology of the Reformation, the developments within Roman Catholic thought—for his expertise on this score, he was invited by the Roman Catholic Church to attend as an observer the Second Vatican Council—and the theological contributions of especially Karl Barth.

In eight chapters, Berkouwer reminisces in an engaging manner, peculiar to his way of thinking and writing, on the pattern and direction of theology as developed and suggested by such men as A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck, V. Hepp, A.H. de Hartog, K. Heim, E. Brunner, K. Barth, J. Moltmann, and W. Pannenberg.

The focus of his theological reflections centers on such key issues as the possibility of apologetics, the essence of church, the character of Scripture's authority, the doctrine of God, the nature of election and reprobation, the significance (particularly for eschatology) of earthly horizons, and the uniqueness and role of faith.

From the beginning to the end of the book, it is clear that Berkouwer wrestles with the interesting and complex question of how to relate biblically to the twentieth-century developments within the movements of Roman Catholicism, Barthianism, Marxism, and Humanism. It is possible to apply to Berkouwer himself what he writes about H. Bavinck's attempts to be relevant and reformed at the turn of the century, namely, that without becoming a relativist, Bavinck displayed a "commitment to truth combined with openness to problems" (18) and that he always sought to establish both contact and encounter with the consciousness of his culture (14).

A careful reading of this book of theological memoirs will cause the reader to experience for himself the truth of Berkouwer's statements in his "Foreword" that curiosity "works itself out in passionate study and serious listening to others" and that this "promises surprises, clearer insight, and deeper understanding—no matter from which direction they [i.e., surprises] come" (7-8).

One could and, perhaps, should regret Berkouwer's failure to point out the existentialistic elements in K. Barth's theology and to be critical of the latter's understanding of the nature and task of theology. However, it would be detrimental to our own theological development not to appreciate and learn from Berkouwer's uncanny ability to cut through a number of theological knots and move doxologically beyond various, man-made dilemmas.

Eager to live and think at the vortex of our culture and modern theology, Berkouwer shuns fear and latches on to the power of biblical love and faith. In this spirit he writes that "escape into the future is not eschatology, but eschaton fever" (181) and that the life of the believer should not be

paralyzed by a "tranquilizing utopian vision" but should, instead, be characterized by "an eschatological urge to action" (201). Fearful of severing sanctification from justification, he pointedly maintains, while referring to 1 Peter 2:24, that "walking in the footsteps of the Lord is not an addendum, but is embraced by him whose healing comes through being crucified and dead to sin and alive to righteousness" (251).

Basically, Berkouwer continues to think in terms of the perspective that H. Bavinck and A. Kuyper articulated prior to him at the Free University. Of A. Kuyper, Berkouwer writes that, back in the nineteenth century, Kuyper, "shocked at the enormous dangers of his own time," refused to resort to "an escapist apocalypticism" and that, instead, he warned "the church against world-flight." "His warnings," Berkouwer continues, "were so strong, in fact, that he was accused of secularizing Christianity. He was said to have 'de-schatologized' the faith" (181).

Berkouwer has been accused of the same thing. That is his honor and contribution. It makes close reading of this fascinating book as well as critical reflection upon it so eminently challenging and profitable for any serious student of the Reformed faith and of theology in general.

Reclaiming the Land. A Study of the Book of Joshua by Don Sinnema, Curriculum Development Centre, Toronto, Ontario, 1977. 95 pages, \$2.50 paperbound. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Associate Professor in Theology and Philosophy.

For a number of years, Don Sinnema—a 1969-graduate of Dordt College—has been making a historical and systematic study of the genius of Reformed theology, of the nature and role of faith, and of the essence and function of Scripture. The fruitfulness of such a study is clearly evident in this small but delightful book.

In consort with members of the Curriculum Development Centre in Toronto, Sinnema shuns all intellectualistic and atomistic interpretations of Scriptural revelation and seeks to recapture, especially for students of junior high school and up, the excitement of genuine listening to and appropriating the riches of God's Word.

This 95-page student manual is the first in a series of guides dealing with God's redemptive revelation in the Old Testament books from Joshua through II Kings. After his beautiful introduction, "The Promise of a Land of Rest," the author discusses the four parts of the book of

Joshua: "Yahweh leads Israel into the Land" (1:1-5:12), "Yahweh Leads Israel in Reclaiming the Land by the Ban" (5:13-12:24), "Yahweh Distributes the Land" (13:1-22:34), and "Yahweh Consolidates His Rule Over the Land of Rest" (23:1-24:33).

What makes Sinnema's understanding and explanation of *Joshua* so fascinating is his uncanny ability to make this part of the Old Testament come alive. The focus is not on a few, isolated moral lessons to be derived from certain peculiar military and cultic events. Sinnema has concentrated instead on showing how *Joshua* forms an integral part of the cosmic drama of the redemption God provided when He carved out for himself a people of His own.

By means of simple but penetrating comments, helpful drawings and maps (provided by Katherine Blomberg, Partners in Print), and clear suggestions (provided by Jean Olthuis and Anne Tuininga) for pedagogically meaningful student activities—for example, puppet shows, war communiqués, designing flags, responsive readings, making murals, and writing scripts—the author makes it possible for the student to sense something of the covenantal sweep of this revelation, the radical nature of salvation, the holiness of God's love, and the cosmic scope of true rest. The purpose throughout this study is to indicate how a part of creation, namely, the land of Canaan, begins to function as a beachhead of freedom and rest recaptured from the captivity and turmoil of sin.

The spirit and purpose of this book is clearly expressed by the author in his *Foreword*: "One more thing to remember: the Bible isn't like an old newspaper—stale news on yellowing pages. The purpose of the Bible is to speak to our hearts and build up our faith; it paints the sweeping picture of God's painstaking work in renewing his whole creation. The book of Joshua tells us about a very real part of God's redeeming efforts. In this book you will meet God in action. You will get a clearer picture of who God is and what he expects from you as his son or daughter" (p. 5).

As a guide that enables us to hear the Word of the Lord more distinctly, I strongly recommend this book (and the accompanying 116-page "Teacher and Study Group Edition") for instructional purposes in schools and for devotional activities at home and in Bible discussion groups. We are greatly indebted to Sinnema for writing this book and to the Curriculum Development Centre for assisting in its publication. Considering the excellent quality of this first publication in a series of guides on several books of the Old Testament, we can hardly wait for other books in this series to appear.