

# Book Reviews

*A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* by Judge Paul Pressler. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999, xi + 362, \$24.99.

Whether it is Teddy Roosevelt's famous assault on San Juan Hill or the infinitely more costly battle of Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima, the picture of a battle staged on a prominent outcropping for a compelling cause is inevitably a memorable event. Paul Pressler's memoirs of his own experiences of the last twenty years is thus entitled *A Hill on Which to Die*. There are at least four applications of the title that arise naturally out of the reading of the book.

First, the title suggests a certain importance void of triviality. The issues over which the Southern Baptist Convention struggled for the past twenty years were, in fact, the very issues about which other denominations had struggled much earlier. The health of those denominations was inevitably determined by the outcome of those crucial conflicts. In the earliest centuries of Christian history, the struggle was primarily Christological—the question of defining who Jesus Christ of Nazareth is. The conflict of the Reformation was essentially a question of salvation—How exactly do we come to know Christ? The question of the period beginning with the Enlightenment has been the epistemological question—How do we know that what we say in Theology is true? And this question of how to know the truth is the question that defined the hill on which Judge Pressler staked his life and reputation.

A second intention of the title is that it suggests an uncertainty of outcome. If an

assault is to be made on a hill, it will, like Iwo Jima, almost always be costly to all participants. At the beginning of the ascent there is no way for the army on the offensive to know whether it can or will win. One may very well “die” on the mountain to be climbed. At the outset of the struggle for the return of the Southern Baptist Convention to the faith of its fathers, the outcome was anything but certain, and the possibility of paying a very high personal price loomed large.

A third meaning of the title highlights the fact that even in victory an enormous cost will almost inevitably be paid in such an effort. This subtitle of the book is “One Southern Baptist's Journey.” That subtitle introduces the reader to the cost and the sorrows of heart involved in one man's experience on the slopes of the “Southern Baptist mountain.”

Finally, the title *A Hill on Which to Die* suggests specific focus in a conflict. Every knowledgeable participant in the Southern Baptist conflict, on whatever side he found himself, knew that the conflict involved a great many issues—some theological, some moral and some political. However, for the conservative movement to be successful in climbing a mountain, while the odds were all arrayed uniformly against it, there was a recognition that the focus needed to be kept on just one mountain—namely, the inerrancy of Holy Scripture.

The title of the book itself was suggested to Judge Pressler as he, like many of us, heard Dr. Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, often saying of other excursions to hills that someone felt important at the

time, “Now, brothers, are we sure that is a hill on which we are prepared to die?” This poignant reminder in turn helped to keep the movement and its participants focused and also to keep one issue before the people. Whatever the Press or any opponent might say, the issue was *truth*, the question of God’s inerrant Word.

The early part of the book includes information that is important to understand the credentials and the training of a freedom fighter. Judge Pressler is able to trace his family tree all the way back to the city of Breslau in Germany, the home of his ancestors. One by the name of Christopher even moved to Wittenberg to become a professor of law at Luther’s University of Wittenberg. Pressler further chronicles wide ranging connections that he has sustained across the years with the general evangelical world, and then especially focuses on Southern Baptist Convention and Baptist General Convention of Texas connections. This is a particularly interesting portion of this book, since in the early days of the conservative reformation among Southern Baptists Pressler’s Baptist background and heritage were almost continually misrepresented and fiercely assaulted.

Next, Judge Pressler sets the stage with those events that transpired to make him a freedom fighter for belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. His experiences as a student at Exeter Preparatory School in New Hampshire, as well as at Princeton University, underscore and begin to develop an awakening in a young man who had, until that time, been reared to believe that to be a Baptist was to affirm that everything God said was true. Events that transpired both at Exeter and at Princeton taught him that there were many Baptists who did not see the Bible

as a document of unquestioned authority. These chapters also reveal the influence of programs like “The Old Fashioned Revival Hour” with Charles E. Fuller and other strong evangelical influences, which gave Pressler further confidence that the Bible was reliable.

The book then moves naturally into his adult years and explains further the relationships that developed and the influences that impacted his life. This portion of the book demonstrates the multidimensional, wide-ranging character of Judge Pressler’s life engagement. Although he could certainly focus on the one hill of the inerrancy of Scripture, few people have actually been as consistently effective in personal evangelism as Judge Pressler. It is not uncommon to encounter people who inquire about Judge Pressler and upon further conversation learn that they themselves were led to Christ by him. In addition, Pressler’s wide ranging mission endeavors have taken him all over Europe and Russia. Because Pressler assiduously avoids anything that sounds boastful, one has to look carefully to note these events, but they are nonetheless there in the book. Furthermore, Judge Pressler’s continuing interest in young people can be observed like shadows throughout the book. Hundreds of people in some way received either financial or mentoring assistance from Judge Pressler. The vast majority of those have remained faithful to him and view him with awe as though he were their father. Their stories are not prominent in the volume, but if one watches carefully he will see them appearing in the natural flow.

Of course, the more familiar episodes of the developing conflict in Southern Baptist life are there also. For example, deacon Bill Price of Second Baptist Church

in Houston ends up playing an interesting role. While Judge Pressler and others were attempting to assist students in Southern Baptist seminaries who were committed to the inerrancy of the Bible, Bill Price mentioned that Pressler, when he was in New Orleans, should become acquainted with Paige Patterson. This suggestion brought the now well known meeting at the Café du Monde in which Pressler and Patterson became acquainted and found common ground almost instantly.

The battle for the hill now in full progress, Pressler's chapter on "How the Liberals Fought the Battle" is one of the most interesting and perceptive chapters in the book. Naturally, there may be moderates who would take issue with some of it, but, in fact, its careful documentation makes it difficult to debunk the presentation. The revealing information concerning layman Johnny Baugh and his long term embrace of liberalism and intense disdain for Pressler will help readers understand the careless vituperation which comes from Baugh, as well as his willingness to underwrite much of the liberal effort monetarily.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book concerns a dream that the Judge repeatedly experienced in 1978 and early 1979. As mentioned above, the very title *A Hill on Which to Die* suggests uncertainty as to outcome. But as a result of Pressler's recurring dream, he always had a great deal more confidence in the outcome of the situation than most of the rest of those associated with him. The author of this review confesses that he was often pessimistic about the outcome. Knowing the Southern Baptist hierarchy as I did and realizing that there were few weapons in the conservative arsenal by comparison to

those of the moderates, who had every state Baptist paper but one in full tow, I really never believed that conservatives would prevail. I suspect that most of the leaders felt the same way. But Pressler's vision of a long line of people marching through the streets of Houston singing, "We're Marching to Zion" gave him a quiet confident faith in the Lord that the truth, in fact, would prevail among Baptists. That story also is chronicled in the book.

Judge Pressler also addresses the matter of the media. Going into the conflict, Pressler probably knew better than most of his compatriots something of what they were facing with the secular media. His experience in the political arena had taught him well, but even he was in some ways not fully prepared for the treatment that he received at the hands of many. As just one example of that, the incredible television misrepresentation of the movement and of Paul Pressler personally presented by former Baptist Bill Moyers marked one of the really low points in the confrontation. On the other hand, the now famous appearance of Judge Pressler on "The Phil Donahue Show," together with Ken Chafin, has to be considered one of the turning points of the entire convention struggle. This event occurred in 1985 and featured Dr. Chafin, who had more of a knack for the media spotlight and making the most of it for his cause than just about any of the moderates. Dr. Chafin, it seemed to many of us, was ubiquitous on radio and television and was certainly formidable. But Pressler chronicles the way in which, on this unforgettable night, Chafin, faced with the necessity of drawing a conclusion about his Jewish rabbi friend if the latter refused to trust Christ, replied that he was confi-

dent that the rabbi would be in heaven regardless of his acceptance of Christ in his life. While Donahue and most of his audience applauded the statement, Southern Baptists watching their televisions gasped; and many for the first time understood the issues. It was the *de facto* end of Dr. Chafin's influence in Southern Baptist life since not even the moderates themselves could afford to identify with those sentiments publicly, whatever they may have believed in their hearts.

Of course, the sorrows arising out of the conflict were many. Those are openly and honestly admitted by Pressler, although the depths of some of those sorrows could scarcely be plumbed in any written form. Early in the controversy the striking down of Pressler's son Paul with a disease, though still not fully diagnosed, from which he suffers until this very day, unleashed the greatest agony on Judge and Mrs. Pressler. There were times, especially during the Kansas City convention when little Paul was in the hospital at death's door. All of these agonies of spirit constituted enormous tests for Judge Pressler, raising repeatedly the question in his own heart as to whether he absolutely could trust the providence of God. More hurt was on its way when the Committee on Nominations wished to nominate Judge Pressler for service on the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. Many of those who had been a part of the conservative movement opposed such a move, apparently feeling convinced that to elect a leader in the conservative movement who had been so pilloried and calumniated to such an important position was too inflammatory. Some failed to support the effort; others openly opposed it. Pressler's ultimate election to the Executive Committee and

his subsequent extensive influence during that tenure of service was a wonderful reward to be sure but never could take away the hurt of being, to some degree, abandoned by fellow warriors in the midst of a battle for one segment of the hill.

So, how would I evaluate one Southern Baptist's journey as rehearsed in *A Hill on Which to Die*? Well, first, I should confess that the present evaluator has both an asset and a liability in the assignment given me. The liability is that for me to have worked so closely with Judge Pressler across the twenty years traversed by this monograph could raise some question about my objectivity. On the other hand, certainly it could be argued that probably no one, other than Nancy Pressler and her children, has been any closer to the Judge and to the events that transpired than I. Therefore, it is by that perspective that I give my evaluation.

First, the book is a great read! The last few chapters of the book are probably a little less scintillating because Judge Pressler of necessity had to deal with technical matters and detailed situations, particularly in his evaluation of the Executive Committee. For the historian, however, those insights will be interesting and necessary, and for any reader the rest of the book is nothing short of riveting.

Second, even though the book is testimonial in nature, it is nevertheless highly accurate. There are some circumstances that I remember a little differently from the way they are portrayed in the book. In those few instances one of us is not right, but the truth is that I tend to trust the Judge's near photographic memory and his extensive and consistent notes more than I trust my own fluctuating memory. Therefore, I can say without hesi-

tancy that the book is highly accurate. The limitations on that accuracy arise only at a few points where the Judge may have had no opportunity actually to know what was happening or else in some cases is perhaps influenced as one would expect in a testimony from his own perspective.

The book has another tremendous asset. The monograph tells the story of a spiritual and theological conflict that, unfortunately, will almost certainly not be the last one of its kind in history. Consequently, the book is a veritable instruction manual for all future conflicts.

Finally, *A Hill on Which to Die* is also a fabulous testimony of a godly layman who was willing to suffer endless calumny in order to stand for the truth. There are times in the book when the tone sounds a bit defensive, when as a clear victor one should probably avoid dwelling much on injustices suffered, but these intrude into the text rarely and always understandably. Certainly they do not mar the overwhelming accuracy of the presentation or dim in any way the critical importance of the story that is told here.

As I read the book, I could not help but be impressed with a new vision of the weapons employed in the taking of this hill. The two sides battled—conservatives making use primarily of spiritual tear gas, the liberals making primary use of smoke bombs. Conservatives lobbed in canister after canister of tear gas in an attempt to smoke out in the open the liberals in the denominational structure, particularly in the seminaries and colleges. The liberals, on the other hand, tirelessly hurled smoke bombs in the direction of the conservatives in order to attempt to obscure what the conservatives' concerns were. They would make all sorts of allegations against the conservatives in order to confuse the

general public, and especially Southern Baptists, so that they could not see clearly what the conservative leaders were saying and doing. Whatever the case, one thing remains absolutely certain. One should never begin the reading of Judge Paul Pressler's book *A Hill on Which to Die* unless he has time to finish it. Once you begin, you will discover that its pages are compelling, and you will relive one of the great theological engagements of all of history as though you were there for every moment of the conflict. As I came to the end of the book, I read his last paragraph,

The citadel of liberalism was charged and the hill on which to die was captured, but not without great cost. God has given the victory in an amazing way. I praise Him for it. I pray that His people will preserve this victory to His glory until He comes again.

I bowed my head and uttered this simple prayer to God, "God grant me to do my part to guarantee that Judge Pressler's efforts and the sacrifices of so many 'unknown' soldiers will not have been in vain."

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*Lethal Harvest*. By William Cutrer, M.D. and Sandra Glahn. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000, 407 pp., \$10.99 paper.

This novel engages with the complexity of bioethical issues by setting them in the context of a gripping story. The specific issues that arise in this work relate to human embryology, cloning, and stem cell research. Yet the story raises more general moral issues as well, inviting the reader to think about the purpose of medical

research and treatment, the importance of means as well as ends, and the potential for good or evil that scientific advance brings.

The form of this treatment of contemporary ethical issues sets it apart from many other works. As we witness a staggering proliferation of medical research and potential treatments, many books seek to explain the research, what it promises, and the ethical issues that are raised. The problem is that the research is so specialized and the explanations so technical, that many readers simply cannot keep up with the issues. Cutrer and Glahn seek to bring those issues to a wider audience by raising them, without burdensome technicality, in the context of a story. This is a welcome contribution, since we dare not leave the moral discussion to those who are experts on either the scientific or the moral issues involved. The fact is, many people who would never read a textbook in bioethics will read this book, and be awakened to significant issues in medical ethics.

The authors indicate at the start that while they have taken some liberty with creating a disease and some technology, it nonetheless accurately depicts both current and potential research and treatment possibilities. Some readers might find the techniques and medical treatments portrayed to be unlikely and seemingly impossible. Perhaps they are—every bit as unlikely and seemingly impossible as actual research and proposals for research that are underway today. Indeed, what is truly alarming is that those who follow advances in medical research will not find the plot of the story to be a great stretch.

The story line is filled with intrigue, and even romance. Moral issues are raised, and both the potential for good and

the problematic means of certain types of medical research are brought out. Unlike some books on bioethics that simply argue for what is morally right or wrong, *Lethal Harvest* causes the reader to think carefully and critically about the moral questions, without providing direct answers. Yet the authors are careful to affirm the significance of human life, and thus the need to protect it at all stages, as well as the problem with pursuing noble goals at the expense of proper means. In addition, the message of the gospel, of hope and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, is presented clearly and realistically: some respond and some do not, and lives are affected for eternity.

The strength of the genre of this book is not merely that it will hold the reader's interest. Novels can also be powerful communicators of moral truth, values and perspectives. As the saying goes, some things are better caught than taught. Indeed, what very often persuades people concerning what is right and wrong is not so much moral argument as stories that convey the issues in life situations. Thus, there is a great need for more authors who are able to communicate truth in the form of a story. This book should prompt reflection and discussion of contemporary issues in bioethics, and should be read by all who are interested in the issues and who are looking for a good book to read.

K. T. Magnuson

*The Letters of John*. PNTC. By Colin G. Kruse. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, 255 pp., \$28.00.

This commentary is an excellent addition to the many fine works already available on the Letters of John. Kruse makes his

own unique contributions to the Johannine literature and they are insightful and helpful, especially for the expositor.

There is a superb balance of scholarship and practical handling of the text. A six-page bibliography is located in the front, and Kruse's awareness of the journal material on John is evident. The commentary dodges no crucial issues which surface in the letters of John, but it does not bog down in discussing them. Additional materials for further research are almost always available in the footnotes. Throughout the commentary, which is marked by careful exposition, are "notes" which deal with relevant theological themes and issues. These include "The Language of Sense Perception," "From the Beginning," "Light and Darkness," "Truth," "Hilasmus," "Antichrist," "God's Seed," "Sinless Perfection," "Monogenes," "The Son's Preexistence," "Eternal Life," "Sins That Do and Do Not Lead to Death," "Bases of Assurance," and "Hospitality." These "notes" are invaluable and enhance the fine treatment of the text. The note on "Hospitality" is the finest I have come across in putting the issue in its historical context.

The real strength of Kruse's work is the economy of words. A New Testament scholar will be pleased with what he discovers. A careful expositor of the Word will be thrilled. The commentary is clear and concise. In the day of "mega commentaries" (Raymond Brown was ahead of his time and did this for us in 1982!), Kruse's thoughtful and judicious exegesis is a breath of fresh air. For the busy pastor, it is a must addition to his library. This book should take its place rightly alongside the works of Brown, Burdick, Hiebert, Marshall, and Smalley in the field of Johannine commentaries.

Daniel L. Akin

*Making Sense of the Trinity: Three Crucial Questions.* By Millard J. Erickson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000, 108 pp., \$11.99 paper.

Here is yet another Ericksonian digest of a major Christian doctrine. While there are several portions repeated here from *God in Three Persons* (Baker, 1995), nevertheless, this book makes a genuine contribution to the kingdom since it was written primarily with laymen in mind (page 9). The book has three chapters, each of which answers a crucial question: Is the doctrine of the Trinity biblical? Does the doctrine make sense? Does the doctrine make any difference?

Readers will not be surprised to find in the first chapter the standard treatment of evidences for the Triunity of God from both the Old and New Testaments. In a more unique section worth noting, "The Structure of Pauline Writings," Erickson shows that even the broad outline of the Book of Romans reflects that Paul "thought of the Godhead in terms of a triadic pattern" (p. 37). The chapter ends with a very helpful introduction to the Trinity in the Gospel of John.

The second chapter briefly surveys Adoptionism, Modalism, and Arianism and is a user-friendly introduction to the development of the doctrine. There is a concern, however, with the second half of this chapter in which Erickson proposes a model for understanding the Godhead based on the idea of *perichoresis* (Gk.). The concept of *perichoresis*, "that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are bound together in such a close unity that the life of each flows through each of the others" (p. 57), is indeed an ingenious Trinitarian proposal offered as early as the Cappadocian Fathers. The problem, however, is that Erickson makes it appear incompatible

with the equally important doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son (pp. 62, 85-87). The Cappadocians did not see the concepts of co-inherence and generation (or procession for the Spirit) as mutually exclusive. In fact, holding to both concepts at the same time seems to be the basis for their proposal. The idea of *perichoresis*, then, along with the eternal generation of the Son may in fact be a better model than the model of “mutual subordination” that Erickson proposes (p. 86).

In the final chapter, Erickson does well to disagree with Immanuel Kant’s claim that nothing practical can be gained from the doctrine of the Trinity. The concept of Trinity helps Christians to understand the problem of evil and suffering (since God is not aloof or indifferent to suffering), to distinguish Christianity from the other religions of our pluralistic society, and directly relates to such matters as prayer and worship (rejecting a “Father only” view).

The last section of the book, “The Believer’s Relationships,” explains the importance of God’s Triunity for the believer’s relationships with other people. Unfortunately, this section seems to betray more of a concern to promote “relational egalitarianism” (although this phrase is not used) and “mutual subordination” (p. 86) than a biblical model for human relations based on an intra-Trinitarian dynamic.

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*The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel.* By Cornelis Van Dam. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997, xxiv + 296pp., \$34.50.

It is remarkable how much can be written

about two words, which appear together only twelve times in the entire Bible (Urim 7x; Thummim 5x). But this book answers one of the most frequent questions I am asked: What were the Urim and Thummim? The volume represents a revision of a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Theologische Universiteit in Kampen, The Netherlands, in 1996. Although Van Dam has published summary statements of his research in several places (ISBE, rev. ed., 4.957-59; NIDOTTE 1.329-331), readers will thank James Eisenbraun for making the full study available to wide readership.

This is a major and truly exhaustive study of a physically “minor” issue: [apparently] two small stones carried in the pouch of Israel’s High Priest and used in determining the will of God on behalf of Israel. Like an expert jeweler, Van Dam examines these enigmatic stones from every conceivable angle. The study divides into three major parts: a survey of the history of interpretation of these stones (pp.9-106), an examination of the biblical evidence (pp.107-258), a survey of theological implications of his findings (pp.259-74). Part one subdivides further into four parts: a topical survey of how these stones have been understood in the past, and examination of analogues from the ancient Near East, a history of how the words Urim and Thummim have been translated, and a chronological summary of interpretation. Part two presents the heart of Van Dam’s argument as he examines successively: revelation and divination in ancient Israel, terms and garments associated with the Urim and Thummim, the role of the High Priest in the manipulation of the Urim and Thummim. Part three provides an overview of the importance of these stones in God’s rule of

Israel and in the history of divine revelation.

Most readers of this review will be interested in Van Dam's answers to the questions they ask concerning the Urim and Thummim. Although Van Dam acknowledges the uncertainties regarding the nature and use of these stones throughout the volume, despite his painstaking work, for the most part the conclusions he arrives at appear sound. The author concurs with tradition in explaining the words etymologically as meaning "lights" and "perfections." But he departs from tradition by interpreting "Urim and Thummim" as hendiadys, that is two words conjoined to express a single notion, in this case, "perfect illumination," and arguing for a single stone rather than two. Rejecting the common view that these stones manipulate like lots, Van Dam suggests that when the Urim and Thummim were consulted, the message from God was learned through an oracular revelation to the High Priest, which was then confirmed by a miraculous light (*'ur*) that emanated from the precious stone.

This conclusion is not only eminently reasonable, it provides a welcome challenge to the widely held view first developed by Julius Wellhausen, that the priesthood and prophecy in Israel were fundamentally opposed. By Van Dam's interpretation, by putting the Urim and Thummim into the hands of the High Priest, priesthood and prophecy are combined. The stone represents for Israel a gracious provision by God of access to his mind and will in critical situations.

Van Dam offers a brief but interesting discussion of the origins and the demise of the Urim and Thummim. Since Exodus fails to describe or report the crafting of

this item, he concludes that the Urim and Thummim were used to determine the mind of God by Israelites prior to the construction of the Tabernacle or the ordination of Aaron as High Priest. This may be so, but equally striking is the fact that the Old Testament never mentions the Urim and Thummim after 2 Samuel 5 (though he suggests it may have been used in 2 Sam 21:1). While some have linked this development with Yahweh's fulfillment of his promise to provide rest [from war] to Israel (cf. 2 Sam 7:1), one may argue with equal force that it is linked with Yahweh's definitive relation to David through Nathan in 2 Samuel 7, that he and his descendants would have eternal title to the throne of Israel. For some unknown reason, once David the Messiah (anointed one) had been confirmed as permanent agent of divine rule in Israel, there was no more need for the Urim and Thummim. Alternatively one might speculate that the Urim and Thummim were linked to the priesthood of Abiathar. Because Abiathar was a descendant of Eli, hence doomed to elimination (1 Sam 2:27-36), access to the will of God through the Urim and Thummim died with him. Significantly the Old Testament never associates this object with the Zadokite priesthood.

While many questions concerning the nature and use of the Urim and Thummim remain, in this volume Van Dam has amassed all the available data that have a bearing on the issue. His style is redundant at times, but readers will thank him for making the details of his expert research available in digestible form. This volume answers many issues raised by his summary articles in the publications cited above. This reviewer commends the volume highly to all who are interested in this enigmatic element of ancient Israelite

religious practice.

Daniel I. Block

*William Louis Poteat: A Leader of the Progressive-Era South.* By Randal L. Hall. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000, ix + 262 pp., \$34.95.

William L. Poteat (1856-1938), president of Wake Forest College from 1905 to 1927, was the most prominent representative of theological modernism in Southern Baptist life in the first third of the twentieth century. Randal Hall discusses modernism as one aspect of Poteat's broader vision of reform in southern society. Hall's thesis is that most southerners rejected Poteat's top-down progressivism and preferred local control to that of professional elites.

Hall rightly avoids interpreting Poteat as a hero of southern progress who opened the southern mind to light and truth. Hall's treatment is more even-handed. He portrays Poteat as a generally noble figure whose program for a moral social order was rooted in the agrarian values of "hierarchy and moral conformity" (62). Poteat advocated "harmony, efficiency, paternalism, and educated leadership" as the basis of those "progressive" reforms which would promote the general welfare (156).

Poteat's vision of society revolved about individual morality and good-natured cooperation among the different classes, races, and economic interests. He sought justice for blacks and an end to racial violence through cooperation and dialogue, but he opposed integration. He advocated prohibition and was one of the most important North Carolina leaders of the movement. He urged the adoption of scientific eugenics to prevent "defective"

persons from producing offspring. He directed denominational and civic commissions for social service and for racial cooperation. But by the 1930s most southerners had rejected such social programs. Poteat promoted Darwinism and liberal Christianity in the 1920s and precipitated considerable controversy among North Carolina's Southern Baptists. Poteat and other liberals wanted to mediate a transformation of the denominations from uncritical conservatism to enlightened progressivism. When Poteat faced accusations of heresy, he evaded the issue by affirming the main points of Christianity in the most general terms. In the 1920s, for example, he affirmed the atonement but refused to define what it meant. This was probably an evasion, for he had subscribed to the moral influence theory of the atonement in a formal address in 1900. The 1922 North Carolina Baptist Convention sustained Poteat after he spoke eloquently of the Christian mission to rescue the world from anarchy and chaos. Division would injure the mission. Even some of Poteat's supporters objected to such evasions and claimed that he overcame the opposition "by chloroforming his enemies" when he should have corrected their bigotry and ignorance (145).

Although the book's thesis should be better integrated with the discussion, this is an important and well-researched contribution to the history of Southern Baptists and southern culture.

Gregory A. Wills

*The Dictionary of Historical Theology.* Trevor Hart, general editor. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, xx + 599 pp., \$49.99.

The age of dictionaries is upon us in evan-

gical life, with IVP publishing eight new contributions since 1990, and Eerdmans weighing in with four or five new titles (depending on how you count them) in the past eighteen months, including this book on historical theology. The volume is something of a hybrid, crossing the lines between dictionaries of theology (such as NDT and EDT) and church history (ODCC and NIDCC). As such it might have a difficult time justifying itself as establishing a bona fide new sub-genre of reference literature. The focus of the work is indicated in the Preface: The work concentrates “deliberately on figures, schools of thought and significant texts in the development of Christian theology. Contributors have been urged to include biographical and wider historical material only in so far as this is germane to the task of locating subjects within their theological contexts” (xix). How well does it do in carrying out this plan?

There are 314 entries in the dictionary. This is a relatively small number, which allows the articles to be long enough to carry some substance. Many of them are very well written and provide real help to readers at virtually all levels. This reviewer has looked over about a third of the expositions and has found in nearly every one of them some substantial material. Since the book assays to provide historical development of ideas and locates subjects within their historical/theological contexts, it often does survey the territory in a manner slightly different from the other kinds of dictionaries listed above. The article on “Amyraldianism,” for instance, positions the Saumur school’s position on the atonement over against Calvin and the Reformed scholastics by detailing the distinction between the two covenants which

are both in the covenant of grace that is endemic to the Amyraldian position. The essay on Thomas Aquinas links Thomas to previous Catholic theology, and then gives an exposition of his major ideas expressed mainly in his two *Summae*. These kinds of discussions are somewhat different from what a student would find in NDT or the ODCC.

There are, however, some problems with the volume, primarily related to selection of topics. One finds here a disproportionately large number of articles on Scottish and English theologians in comparison to American or even continental thinkers. Liberals are also given precedence over evangelicals, even important evangelicals. Likewise, there are virtually no Baptists featured. David Cairns, A. B. Bruce, Sidney Cave, John Scott Lidgett, and John Whale all have articles devoted to them, but there is nothing here on Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, or J. Gresham Machen (or even the Princeton School as a whole). The only Baptist treated, as far as this reviewer could tell, is Rauschenbusch, which means that John Gill, Augustus H. Strong, and E. Y. Mullins have been left out. “Devotional theologians” the Blumhardts are included, but John Bunyan is not. Since three of the five editors are from the British Isles, it may be that their prejudices dictated such a line-up for the featured thinkers of the last two centuries.

Still, the volume is very nicely done, and the articles on Patristic, Medieval, and Reformed theology and theologians are generally pretty good, space limitations considered. This volume will become a standard reference tool for instructors, students, and theologically-inclined pastors (may their tribe increase). For those of us who are admitted *compendiaphiles*, this

new dictionary will likely take an honored, if not exalted, place on the bookshelf that is nearest to the writing desk.

Chad Brand

*The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology.* By Carl R. Trueman. Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1998, xii + 267 pp., \$26.99 paper.

Twenty-five years ago the study of Reformation theology underwent a reformation in its own right as historians such as Heiko Oberman positioned Luther, Calvin, and the other Magisterial Reformers in the context of medieval Catholic scholarship in a way previously unspecified. They showed that the Reformers were not upstarts, nor were they lone voices finally resurrecting the theological corpse of an Augustine forgotten for over a thousand years. Rather these men were continuing and amplifying a theological tradition that was present in the high Middle Ages in the theology of such individuals as Gregory of Rimini and John Wycliffe. This insight has sent scores of scholars scurrying on their way to work out the implications of this view in doctoral dissertations and monographs on the subject, so that a veritable cottage industry has formed in attempt to understand the *schola Augustiniana moderna*.

In the last decade or so a new generation of theologians has turned its gaze on the Protestant scholastics. Long maligned as distorters of the tradition of Calvin and Luther (see especially Basil Hall's famous essay, "Calvin against the Calvinists"), the Protestant scholastics are now getting a new look, one that is slowly overturning previous vilification. R. D. Preus led out in this defense of Protestant scholasticism

with his two-volume work on post-Reformation Lutheran theology. More recently Richard Muller, Joel Beeke, and Sinclair Ferguson have all weighed in to rewrite the book on Scholasticism, and have shown that previous characterizations were little more than caricatures. Carl Trueman of the University of Nottingham can be numbered among those who are taking a new look at post-Reformation theology.

Trueman takes on a formidable task—to see if he can draw a happy face on the theology of John Owen. Owen has long been considered little more than a defender of limited atonement by his detractors (and sometimes by his defenders), a theologian whose work is more philosophical than biblical. Trueman makes several major points. Critics of the scholastics often contrast John Owen with one of his contemporaries, Richard Baxter, arguing that Baxter was a pious man who, though he had great intellectual gifts, did not fall prey to the Aristotelian spirit, but was instead a biblicist. Trueman shows that the opposite is the case, for while Owen's systematic theology was structured around the contour of the biblical narrative (in modern parlance, a "biblical theology"), Baxter's theological works were explicitly patterned along the lines of traditional (*via moderna*) Catholic scholastic methodology.

Trinity is central to Owen's entire theological project. It drives his doctrine of God's attributes, his soteriology, and his Christology. Trueman argues that this enforced Trinitarianism prevents Owen from falling into sterile philosophical aridity in his discussions of the nature of God and of providence. The English divine did, of course, make extensive use of scholastic categories, but primarily as a tool to

keep his theology evangelical, avoiding the danger of falling prey to the Scylla of Arminianism or the Charybdis of Socinianism. Careful attention to Thomistic and Scotist distinctions enabled him to walk the tightrope between heresies. Soteriological considerations, not philosophical profundity, were the driving force in Owen's sometimes tortuous discourses on providence and election.

The older view that the Protestant scholastics were terrorists ravaging the Reformation heritage is no longer tenable.

As I was going up the stair,  
I met a man who wasn't there  
He wasn't there again today.  
Oh, How I wish he'd go away.

Trueman quotes this quatrain as a parting shot to indicate that the common way in which these theologians are portrayed by modern (especially post-Neoorthodox critics) is simply not tenable—the men depicted in such caricatures are “not there” in the seventeenth century. Mencken's definition of Puritanism, then, as a “haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy,” is simply a myth. It is a fact that people believe myths, and often find comfort in them, but they are myths nonetheless. Part of the minister's task is to dispel those myths and to tell the truth. This book will not only help us to tell the truth about others in the body of Christ, but will also give us insight into the faith once delivered.

Chad Brand

*Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus: A Philological-Historical Study of the Key Jewish Themes Impacting Mark 14:61-64.* By Darrell L. Bock. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul

Siebeck), 1998, xiv + 285 pp., n. p. Reprint, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism: The Charge Against Jesus in Mark 14:53-65.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000, 300 pp., \$26.99.

Darrell Bock is research professor of NT at Dallas Theological Seminary, and has published significantly in the arena of gospel studies, including a mammoth two volume commentary on Luke and his dissertation on prophecy and proclamation in Luke. In this study Bock examines the charge of blasphemy that was raised against Jesus of Nazareth according to Mark 14:61-64. He inquires as to why the words Jesus pronounced before the Sanhedrin were considered to be worthy of death, and he also considers whether the account is historically credible. Chapter one consists of a survey of scholarship since the work of Hans Lietzmann in 1931. The work of Paul Winter, Josef Blinzler, David Catchpole, August Strobel, Otto Betz, E. P. Sanders, Martin Hengel, Robert Gundry, Raymond Brown, J. C. O'Neill, and C. E. Evans is surveyed. This chapter helpfully acquaints the readers with the parameters of the discussion and sets the stage for Bock's own contribution.

Chapter two is the most extensive in the book. Here blasphemy in Judaism is investigated, beginning with the OT and concluding with the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. Bock also examines all other relevant Jewish literature between these two points. The use of God's name constituted blasphemy according to Judaism. Bock shows, however, that blasphemy cannot be limited to the utterance of God's name. People were also guilty of blasphemy if they were idolators, manifested disrespect towards God, and insulted his chosen leaders. What Bock demonstrates here is that the Jewish back-

ground does not support the idea that Jesus would have been condemned only if he pronounced the divine name (cf. *m. Sanh.* 7:5). Other offenses could also count as blasphemy, especially comparing oneself to God, and hence the accuracy of the Markan account should not be disputed on the grounds that Jesus did not utter God's sacred name. Incidentally, Robert Gundry argues that Jesus did pronounce God's name, but Bock rightly questions that thesis, and notes that even if Jesus pronounced God's name in citing Ps 110:1 it is not clear that this would have been grounds for blasphemy.

The third chapter explores exalted figures in Judaism since Jesus claimed that he would sit at God's right hand and return with glory on the clouds. In recent scholarship the Jewish antecedents to NT christology have been the subject of intense study. One thinks here of Larry Hurtado's, *One God, One Lord*. Bock considers both human and angelic figures in this chapter. Most of the human figures were honored by God and hence received revelations about what would occur in the future. A few honored men do sit in God's presence, including Moses, David, and Enoch. Adam and Abraham sit to witness the final judgment, and Abel sits when the last judgment commences. The most exalted figure is Enoch in *1 Enoch* 37-71. He is honored as the Son of Man who will conduct the end time judgment. Angels on the whole do not share the exalted position of the few human beings bestowed with honor. Only Gabriel among the angels sits in God's presence and in this instance he serves merely as Enoch's escort. Further, Bock shows that the high honor bestowed on Enoch and Enoch-Metatron led to criticism of his stature in some circles, showing that some

Jewish writers feared that the uniqueness of God was threatened.

The concluding chapter examines the text in Mark 14:61-64 where Jesus is charged with blasphemy. It is here that Bock pulls together the threads of his study. He argues that the examination of Jesus before the Sanhedrin was not intended to be a capital trial, and hence the fact that the trial does not accord with the rules of the Mishnah is irrelevant. I think Bock rightly argues that we have a preliminary hearing by which the Jews were attempting to find grounds to hand Jesus over to the Romans. Bock also contends that a number of sources for the trial exist, including Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and even Saul. I would like to add that the resurrected Lord himself may have communicated to his disciples what occurred during the trial scene. Scholars rarely consider this possibility, but evangelicals who uphold the truth of the resurrection may legitimately list Jesus himself as a possible source of the events at the trial. Bock argues that Jesus' appeal to Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 was considered to be blasphemy. Indeed, in claiming to ride on the clouds of heaven Jesus claims for himself something that was true only of God (Exod 14:20; Num 10:34; Ps 104:3; Isa 19:1). Bock goes on to say that Jesus' claim to be the end time judge was not blasphemy per se to the Jewish leaders (given the tradition of Enoch as Son of Man), but what they objected to was Jesus' arrogation of this role. But I wonder if Bock's own evidence points beyond this, in that Jesus was claiming divine authority as one riding upon the clouds. In any case, Bock is correct that the startling directness with which the earthly Jesus claims such authority would scandalize the religious leaders. Those honored in the

past might have been considered worthy of such a role, though even here, as Bock shows, some Jews were nervous about Enoch's reputed status. Assigning divine authority to Jesus, as a teacher from Galilee, was, however, unthinkable. I think Bock is correct here, but he could have strengthened his thesis by pointing out particular issues that made Jesus' objectionable to the Jewish leaders. In other words, they found it difficult to believe that Jesus of Nazareth could have divine authority and contravene the sabbath, hold suspicious views on the Torah, associate with tax collectors and sinners, promise the destruction of the temple, and engage in a fierce critique of the religious leaders. Bock also shows that Jesus also implicitly claimed to be the future judge of the religious leaders, which they believed violated Exod 22:27. Bock concludes his study by saying that the events and the sayings have a strong claim to historical reliability. We can be thankful for the reverent scholarship informing this work, one which is informed by a sound and rigorous historical method and one in which the supernatural character of early Christianity is maintained.

Thomas R. Schreiner

*Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period: 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.* Edited by Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green. Peabody, Mass." Hendrickson, 1999, xxv + 693 pp., \$59.95.

Readers not well acquainted with Judaism are in need of a tool that can assist them when encountering unfamiliar words, institutions, practices, events, and persons. This dictionary, first published by

Macmillan in 1996 and now republished by Hendrickson, fills such a need. The scholars contributing to the volume are acknowledged experts in the field, and so the novice in Judaism can be confident of instruction by trusted guides. The entries on the whole are short and clearly written. The editors intended the work to be a *dictionary*, not an encyclopedia, which explains why the entries are concise. Bibliographies are not included, though I must confess that I think brief bibliographies would have been helpful, and yet they would have increased the size and presumably the expense of the work.

The dictionary is ideal for students and pastors who need a definition of "mikveh" or who wonder who the "Boethusians" are. The brevity of the work is apparent when the article on the Pharisees is restricted to about one and one-half columns, and yet the entry is an excellent introduction to the Pharisees. The dictionary does not restrict itself only to matters Jewish, but also includes matters that affected Judaism from 450 B.C. to A.D. 600. Hence, there are entries on Constantine, writers like Diodorus Siculus, Gnosticism, Pythagoreanism, the Chionites (a non-Jewish people), and Egypt. The dictionary also has some entries on Christianity, including John the Baptist, Tertullian, Jesus of Nazareth, Jerome, and even *ex opera operato!* The standard critical view is adopted, so that in the case of Jesus it is argued that reconstructing his teaching is difficult since the gospels are later theological accounts. Some theological topics are also explored, and some of these receive a more lengthy treatment. For instance, there are entries on predestination, salvation, scripture, inspiration, etc.

The dictionary's value does not lie in its discussion of Christianity or its refer-

ence to things Roman, since most students have access to these matters in other sources. Most Christian students, though, have difficulty identifying the names of Jewish tractates in books like the Mishnah, and the dictionary translates the title and gives a brief survey of contents. For that matter some students may not know what the Mishnah or Tosefta or Talmud are, and hence it immensely helpful for the novice. It is also interesting to read entries on matters like “self-righteousness” to receive a Jewish perspective on such matters (although many of the scholars who contributed are not themselves Jewish). I recommend the dictionary as a lucid and scholarly tool for students. It will be especially useful to busy pastors who need help in finding brief definitions in matters that are outside their usual frame of reference.

Thomas R. Schreiner